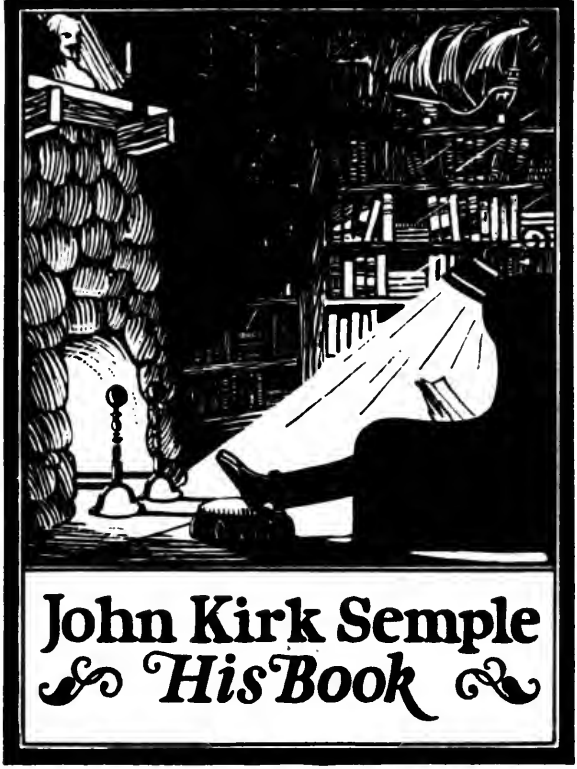

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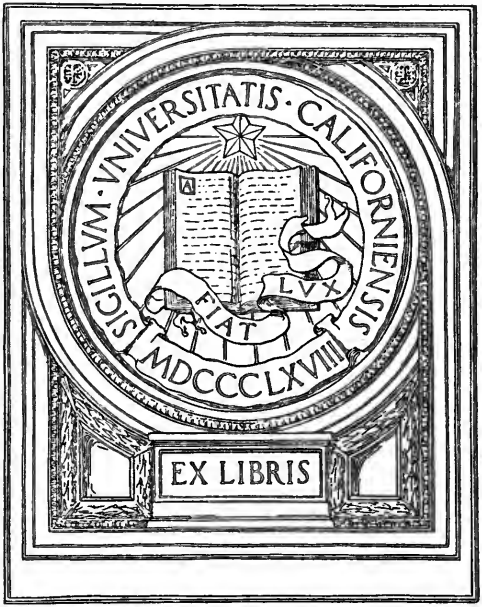

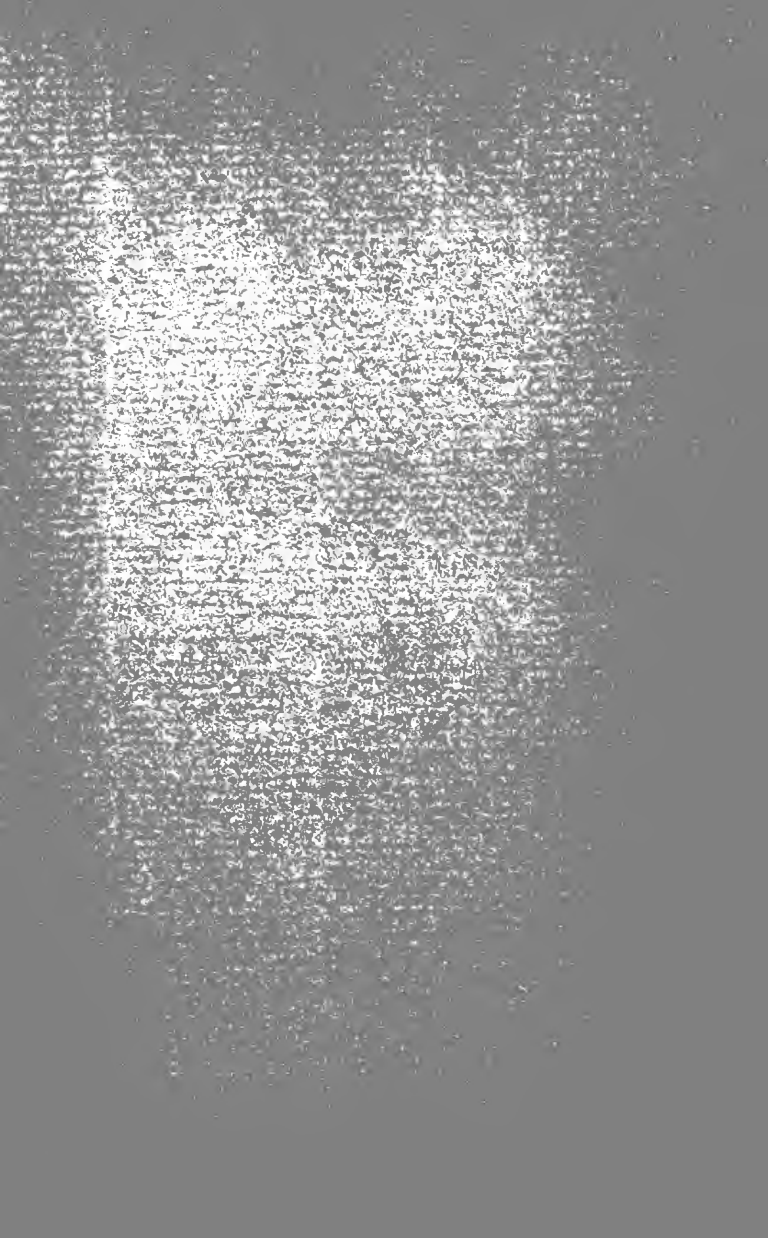

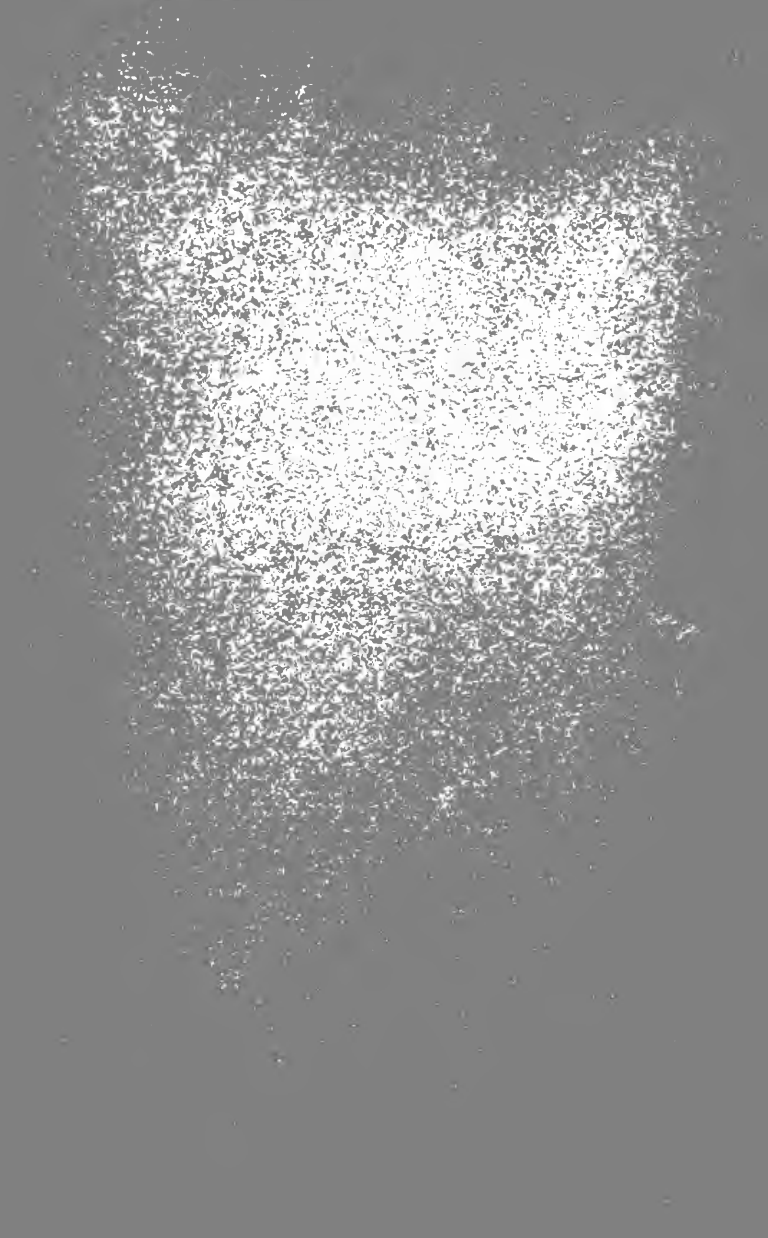

PHILOSOPHERS IN TROUBLE

A VOLUME OF STORIES

BY

L. P. JACKS

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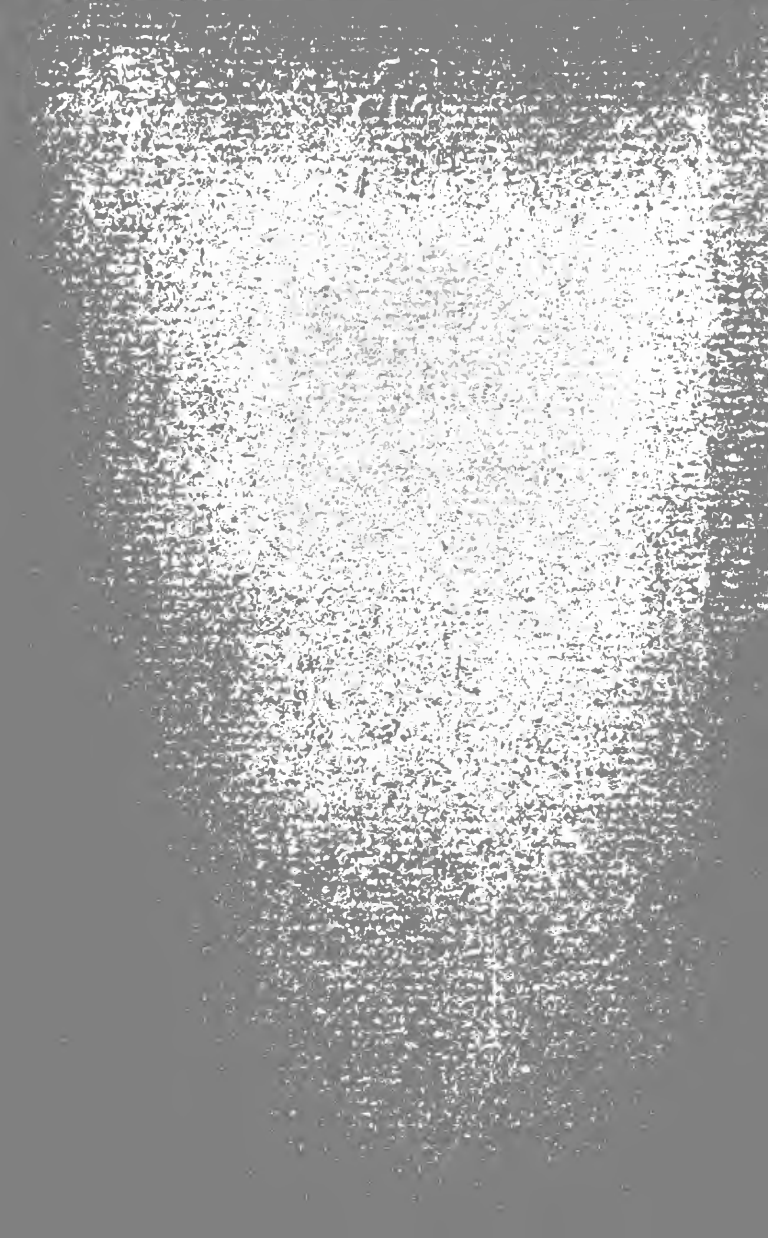

I

NOT CONVINCING; OR, THE REJECTED ARTICLE

Among the great men of our age there is one at least whose fame is partly derived from the circumstance that his career has been till now an enigma in biography. I refer of course to Camelius. To be sure, his claim to remembrance rests on ground more solid than this, but is rendered the more imposing by the clouds that surround its base, whence it rises like a mountain from the mists. Not only have the psychologists failed to account for his history, but his most intimate friends, of whom he had many among the wise, have had to profess themselves equally at fault. A voluminous literature has grown up around his personality; two long biographies have appeared; he has been the theme of innumerable monographs, and studies in the magazines; his correspondence has been edited; his love-

letters have been made public; and the controversies thence arising have caused the rise and fall of several reputations. Students of character have sought enlightenment from his face, which was powerful, benignant, and expressive; a famous man of letters is reported to have sat immovable for two hours in front of the portrait by Watts in the National Gallery, vainly trying to probe the secret; the science of physiognomy has been called in; phrenologists and clairvoyants have exhausted their arts. But the enigma has held its ground.

The key is now in my hands. How it came into my possession I shall presently relate; but before doing this it may be well to summarise the main facts of Camelius' history so far as they have already been made known to the public. The reader who desires a more detailed account will find what he wants in either of the two biographies aforesaid.

Paul Camelius was a son of the manse. Early in life he showed dispositions which indicated that he would follow the career of his father. He went to a Scotch university; pursued his theological studies with no trace of modern recalcitrancy; took a high degree

in divinity; and at the age of twenty-five was appointed to the pastorate of a large church in Edinburgh. As preacher and scholar he soon became famous; his church was crowded, and among the congregation were most of the church-going professors of the University; while his great work, *A Defence of the Literal Truth of the Whole Bible*, gave him a foremost place among living theologians and made him a pillar of the orthodox faith.

For several years he held his office and maintained his reputation with increasing praise, his opinions unchanged in form, but ever more resolute in expression. Then, to the great distress of many, it was reported that in private conversation he had expressed a doubt as to the authenticity of the Song of Songs; and not long afterwards Scotland was shaken to its foundations by the announcement that Camelius had disappeared. Without warning of any kind he had, in fact, run away—in a panic, some said, but how caused nobody could tell. The only witness who could throw any light on the matter was Mrs M'Leaky, with whom he lodged as a bachelor. This lady testified that for some time past Camelius had shown signs of

physical distress; that he walked about his room in the dead of night; that she had heard him moaning; that he had twice left his porridge untasted on Sunday morning; and that he had burst into tears when she suggested that he should marry.

For more than a year nothing whatever was heard of him, and to this day nobody knows where he spent the interval. At the end of that period he suddenly came before the public in a character which caused his former admirers to gasp and groan. A remarkable novel had appeared; it was taking the public by storm; everybody was discussing it; the reviews were full of it; great philosophers used it as an illustration; the Archbishop of Canterbury preached upon it in St Paul's; and the portrait of the author, who was none other than Paul Camelius, was in the shop windows. The *Times* reviewer declared that it was the greatest novel of modern times.

The title of this masterpiece was *The Clergyman; or, New Scenes from Clerical Life.* It was not very long, but greatly to the point. The "religious crisis of modern times" provided the setting, or the atmosphere, the narrative being presented as a series of loosely connected

episodes, held together, so far as they were held at all, by the mysterious relations of a man and a woman, which were kept throughout in the background, and conveyed to the reader by a delicate method of suggestion. In this lay the supreme art of the story. Strong motives were seen at work in the foreground, sensuous, intellectual, moral, and religious; but the reader was led to feel that these forces, though they made the noise and attracted the light, were under the control of a hidden power residing in the woman, whose figure was never fully displayed. Some critics indeed were tantalised by this obscurity, and charged it as a fault against the book, which, they said, failed as a self-continuous whole on that very account. But even those critics were forced to admit that the scenes and episodes in the book, loosely strung and obscurely connected as they seemed, were marked individually by a sweep of imagination and a force of expression which entitled the author to a high place among contemporary novelists.

In a few months the public, whose memory nowadays is surprisingly short, seemed to forget entirely that Camelius had made his entry upon life as a great preacher and Biblical

scholar. What we were all thinking about was not his past but his future, for he was still a young man; and nobody needs to be reminded of the intense expectation with which, having read *The Clergyman*, we looked forward to the appearance of Camelius' next book. In two years it came; and again expectation was baffled. The second book was not a novel, but a series of biographical sketches, which were at once recognised as giving the inner history of a number of men and women who have taken a notable part in various progressive movements of modern times. Under the general title of *The Progressives* we were presented with a gallery of literary photographs, almost untouched, of persons well known to the public, and easily identified, in spite of the imaginary names under which they were introduced—this being the only particular in which the author allowed himself to depart from strict historical fact. Among the figures portrayed was one which all of us pronounced to be Camelius himself, and, had it not been for subsequent developments in his career, the chapter in question would have solved the Camelius enigma once and for all, or, rather, would have prevented it from coming into existence, at least in its more

complicated form. Moreover, the book was rich in comment on current events and contained some remarkable documents, hitherto unknown to exist, which threw a flood of light on certain obscure matters of recent history, showing in every case that the secret influence of a woman had been the determining factor in the course of events. So faithful indeed were the revelations on these matters that a lady of high station brought an action for libel against the author. Camelius lost, but, the libel being judged innocuous, the damages were assessed at one farthing.

From the books that followed in rapid succession we perceived that Camelius had deserted the field of Romance for that of History, and much to our disappointment we were forced to recognise that the great novel would remain a solitary exception among the literary labours of his life. His imagination, we said, had exhausted itself in a single effort, and it seemed to us that the literal truthfulness, the painstaking accuracy, the conscientious regard for fact displayed in his later works were a poor exchange for those free and daring flights of genius which led us, on reading *The Clergyman*, to predict another Shakespeare. Nevertheless, there was no denying that the value of

the later books as history and biography was exceptionally high. It is true that, after the trouble which followed the publication of *The Progressives*, Camelius rigidly abstained from the portrayal of living personalities. His subjects were now taken from a past sufficiently remote—that is, from a region whence no action for libel can come; but we never doubted that he gave us in every portrait the real man about whom he was writing, just as he was. None of us therefore was in the least surprised when we heard that Camelius had received the honour of knighthood and subsequently been appointed to the Chair of the Political Biography of all Ages in a newly founded University.

For five years or more matters remained on this basis. At the end of that time Camelius had won a position among the foremost historians of Europe. He had become the recognised leader of the now famous "School of Accuracy," whose ideals, as we know, are the object of a cult among students of the past, and have caused the rewriting, with surprising results, of much that was once regarded as history. As a patient sifter of facts it may be said, without fear of challenge, that

Camelius has had no equal in modern times. Neither the pathetic fallacy nor any other fallacy was ever allowed to intrude itself between the thing he saw and the eyes wherewith he saw it. He was wholly without prejudice; he ground the axe of no man's theory, not even of his own; and he never quoted a reference without verifying it four times—at least, so men said. He simply gave you "the facts." Meanwhile he remained unmarried. He had brought romance to others; but none, so far as we knew, came to him. He was now thirty-five years of age.

But the volcano within him, though dormant, was not extinct. One morning in the middle of term the large audience in his lecture-room was waiting as usual for the moment when, on the last stroke of eleven, the door should open and Camelius appear, gown on back and cap in hand. The last stroke sounded; Camelius did not appear, and people looked at one another as who should say, "Are the skies going to fall?" Five minutes elapsed, ten minutes, and still no Camelius. The college janitor was sent for and inquiries made. The janitor had not seen him that morning. "Was he in his private room?" No. A telephone message was sent to his house. He was

not there. Bewilderment, speculation, alarm followed in rapid succession. By nightfall the police were searching for Camelius all over the neighbourhood. But they could find no trace of him. Once again he had run away.

This time there was an interval of four years during which nothing whatever transpired to indicate the whereabouts of the missing Professor, nor what had become of him. Another man occupied his chair with tolerable acceptance. It was commonly supposed that Camelius was dead ; and a movement was on foot for erecting a tablet to his memory in the vestibule of the college whose name he had rendered illustrious all over the world.

Suddenly a rumour began to fly about that Camelius had reappeared and was living in London. At first we doubted, but our doubts were set at rest on receiving by post a privately printed play, with the name of Camelius as the author, and an invitation to be present at a performance, in a large country-house, which had been arranged with a view to testing the suitability of the play for the public stage. The title was *The Isle of Dead Women—a Drama of Civilisation.*

As I am one of the few survivors of those invited to the trial performance, one of the

few indeed who were ever allowed to read the full text of the play, I will here present a somewhat fuller account of it than has yet been made public. I may say at once that from the stage-manager's point of view the piece was quite impossible.

All recognised laws of dramatic structure were set at defiance. The conventional unities of place and time were thrown to the winds. The scenes were laid in primeval forests, in the cities of classical antiquity, in modern London, in the Isles of Atlantis, and in Hell. The action extended over a period which critics variously estimated at from ten to twenty thousand years. The actors were epochs of history, daringly put on the stage in the persons of self-continuous individuals. In the first act the heroine was the queen of a savage tribe gathering her naked warriors to battle against the hosts of Babylon and Tyre. In the second, Pericles was making love to her. In the third, she was bringing up a family in a London suburb. In the fourth, she was married to the King of Atlantis and refusing to bear him children. In the fifth, she was in a cave scraping the skin of a polar bear with an instrument of flint. The lives of all the characters were similarly prolonged.

The first act showed man in a savage state, trembling before the demons that haunt the woods. The second introduced St Paul rebuking the culture of ancient Greece. The third revealed the Apostle in the dock of a London Police Court charged with blasphemy against the Christian religion. The fourth found him in the midst of the Social Millennium, predicting its speedy end. The fifth took him down on a missionary enterprise into Hell.

St Paul was in fact the hero of the piece. You met him under many transformations, but always at one with his own purpose and with himself. You saw him perplexed, but not unto despair; smitten down, but never destroyed. You saw him writing epistles to ancient Churches and novels to the modern world. You saw him in the palace of Cæsar, and in the casual ward of an English workhouse. You saw him in the Roman amphitheatre, where the lions were crunching the bones of the saints. You saw him in the gallery of a London theatre, attentively watching a play by Mr Bernard Shaw. You saw him scourged through the ages and emerging triumphant at the end. He brings on the crisis and saves civilisation when all seems lost.

Like the author of *King Lear*, Camelius

did not shrink from making woman the villain of the piece. In one scene Jael, clothed in panthers' skins, was driving a nail into Sisera's head. In another Miss Pankhurst, in a hobble skirt, was setting fire to a house. Woman, wherever she appeared, was always doing wrong. But through it all the art of the author maintained the even flow of an irreproachable continuity, and when at last it brought you to the Isle of Dead Women, and showed you a whole female population socially emancipated and scientifically barren, the ages through which you had passed seemed to shrink to the dimensions of so many days, and you marvelled to think how little had happened since the world began.

Such was the action of the piece: it was a Drama of Civilisation. As to its emotional atmosphere, all who saw it acted will remember how deeply the sentiment of terror was present from first to last. Fear was the keynote, and until the moment when St Paul retrieved the situation in the fifth act an awful gloom hung over the stage, which was the more intensified by gleams of courage and hope shown like lightning flashes at critical moments by the humbler actors in the piece. The opening scene revealed a group of primi-

tive men, grovelling in terror of the unknown; and in every succeeding development of the action men and women were seen in flight before imaginary pursuers, or trembling in the presence of actual risks. As civilisation advanced the note of fear penetrated deeper and deeper into life. Defying current ideas, in this as in everything else, Camelius exhibited the movement from savagery to civilisation as one of intensifying fear. Over against the savage trembling before the unknown was shown the picture of the civilised man trembling yet more violently before the known. Civilisation was exhibited as full of misgivings regarding its own future, profoundly shaken by a sense of its own insecurity, doubtful of everything, and doubtful most of all about itself. Even to the promised land of the social millennium the dogs of fear maintained their unrelenting pursuit of man. When all had been won a great cry arose lest all should be lost. A chorus of triumphing singers, introduced in the fourth act, celebrates the Victory of Man: "He has won what he fought for." Whereupon a second chorus asks from the shadows, "How long will he keep it?" The first chorus, not heeding the question, continues to chant, "All now is

well." To which the second replies, "The greater evil if well becomes ill." The first, still not heeding, goes on, "Life is good." "The more is death to be feared," answers the second. So terror resumes its course and the women become barren.

Needless to say, the effect of the piece, when seen on the stage, was to produce the sensations of a horrible nightmare. It was never acted again.

Camelius was understood to be staying in the house where the performance was to be held. But he kept to his room and was seen by none of the guests. We were told, however, that he would appear on the stage when the performance was over and would offer the audience his own interpretation of the play.

The play was over, and we had waited some time for the author to present himself, when a servant entered the room and placed a telegram in the hands of our host. It ran as follows: "Forgive my absence. Courage has failed me. I cannot face my own creation.—Camelius." The telegram was dated from a distant town. Once more Camelius had run away. This telegram was his last communication to his former friends.

Such was the great Camelius Enigma. I

have now to tell how the key fell into my hands.

In the summer of 1913, having made an engagement with the editor of a London periodical to write a series of articles on the various new religions which have recently come into existence in the United States, I was making an extensive tour in that country for the purpose of studying my material on the spot. By the end of the autumn I had completed my investigations, and was taking a well-earned rest, prior to my return journey, in a certain small and beautiful city of a Western State.

Taking up the Sunday paper one morning, my attention was attracted by the following advertisement displayed in the largest type :—

DIVINE FICTIONISM
(THE RELIGION OF THE FUTURE)
ACTOR CAMELIUS
will address the Divine Fictioners to-day in
The Temple of Light
(corner of 17 and 39 Street)
at 3 o'clock.
N.B.—The Temple of Light is open day and night for private meditation.

Though it was early morning when I read this, you may be sure that I lost no time in

making my way to the corner of 17 and 39 Street. I saw before me an imposing building of red brick, with wonderful gables and overhanging eaves. I entered the building, and a courteous official, seeing that I was a stranger, asked if I desired information.

I said yes. I explained that I was unacquainted with the principles of Divine Fictionism and should be very grateful for any literature which would enlighten me. I also asked him a good many questions, which he answered with much intelligence and gravity. He said that he would presently give me some leaflets which were designed for the information of seekers after light. In reply to inquiries about Actor Camelius, he told me that this gentleman was the most celebrated living exponent of Divine Fictionism, and that I should miss one of the greatest opportunities of my life if I failed to hear him that afternoon. I said that I would assuredly hear him, and, having received the promised literature, returned with it to my hotel.

The first of the leaflets, which at once engaged my study, was entitled "The Essence of Divine Fictionism." I reproduce it entire.

"Divine Fictionism may be defined as Simplicity Simplified. Anyone who has attended a play or read a novel can grasp its principles at once. It is the Religion of the Future.

"The new gospel was anticipated by Shakespeare in the saying, 'All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players.' This was intended by Shakespeare as a metaphor. Modern Science has discovered that it is a Fact.

"The whole Universe is a work of Literary Art. It is the Drama of Dramas. The Father is the Author of the Play, the Son is the Producer, the Holy Spirit is the Stage Prompter. The Doctrine of the Trinity is true. Its truth has been fully apprehended by Divine Fictionism, and by Divine Fictionism alone.

"Men and women are *dramatis personæ* in the Cosmic Play. Their value is purely and exclusively dramatic. They exist for the purposes of the play and for no other. They are all fictitious. To know this is Blessedness and Salvation.

"The good are those who know their parts and remember them. The evil are those who trespass on other people's parts and forget their

own. There is no other distinction between virtue and vice.

"At death the Actor is simply transferred to another Company, where he takes up a new part in another Play. This transference will be endlessly repeated.

"Religion is the state of wonder as to what is going to happen next. Nobody knows how the plot will be developed, nor the situations in which Dramatic Necessity may place him a moment hence. He waits to see. Anyone who remembers his emotions when, in reading a serial novel, he comes to the words 'continued in our next,' can easily acquire the proper attitude to the Universe—which is religion.

"Such is Divine Fictionism. It is the only Religion in perfect harmony with Science."

My first feelings on reading this document were a mixture of amusement and admiration. The reasons for the amusement are obvious. The admiration was based on the fact that of all the new religions I had studied in America none had succeeded in stating its principles with comparable clearness and brevity.

In reading the document a second time the amusement began to subside and the admira-

tion gathered force; and I remember saying to myself, "Have a care, or these Divine Fictioners will convert you."

I then turned to a pamphlet, or brochure, which, as it promised to be of greater interest, I kept to the last. It was called "The Autobiography of Actor Camelius."

As this is too long for entire reproduction, I will quote only the key passages.

"During the first half of my life," says Camelius, "it was my misfortune to be misunderstood.

"Forty years ago I came before the world as a champion of the orthodox faith against the assaults of modern doubt. These doubts I attacked in my sermons and in my book *A Defence of the Literal Truth of the Whole Bible.* But nobody ever suspected *whose* doubts I was attacking. They were my own. My work at this time was one long protest, vigorous, I must admit, and well sustained, against my own attitude of mind. I never believed, no, not for one moment, in the literal truth of the whole Bible. But I tried to believe it, and my book stands as a record of the effort I put forth to that end. The effort failed, and I ran away. And here again no-

body ever asked, or thought of asking, what or whom I ran away from. I ran away from myself.

"My next appearance was understood to be in the field of Romance. I became famous as a novelist, and *The Clergyman* was said to be the greatest work of fiction in modern times. But *The Clergyman* was not a work of fiction in any sense whatsoever: it was intended as a faithful transcript of my own experience. Every scene in it was a photograph; every page of it was history, the work of a mind as yet unversed in the flights of the creative imagination. No surprise could be greater than mine when I found this book acclaimed as a novel. Nevertheless, the reviewer who was the first to give the book that character taught me a valuable lesson. The lesson he taught me was this: that a plain record of fact may deceive the best judges of evidence, and that mankind in general are weak in historical sense.

"The lady whose fugitive appearance in the background of the story proved so tantalising to the critics, and caused some of them to interpret her as 'the faintest shadow of a shade,' was, on the contrary, the most literally real of all the persons introduced into

the record. True, she was dead; and I was hoping to rejoin her, as I still am. But that makes no difference to her reality. I enjoin upon my brother Actors to keep the grass green on her grave, and the letters of the motto on her headstone—written by me—cleanly cut and free from moss. They will find the grave in such and such a place.

"Believing that my reputation as a great novelist would cause people to distrust my accuracy as an historian and to charge me with romancing whenever I was relating facts that astonished them, I resolved to take myself at the world's valuation and confine my writing thenceforth to fiction. With this in view I wrote *The Progressives*, in which there is not one statement of fact from beginning to end. At least no statement in that book was intended by me to relate to any person who has lived, or to any event that has happened. It was a pure coincidence, but for me a most unfortunate one, that the caps I had manufactured fitted the heads of people in whom I took not the slightest interest, and of some of whom I had not even heard. With a surprise somewhat diminished, it is true, by the shock of my former experience, I found that the public were taking my myths for records of

actual events and my fancies for pictures of living persons. One of these, whose personality had not for a moment been present to my mind, sued me for libel and won the action. Thus my fiction was taken for history, as my history had previously been taken for fiction; and I said to myself with some bitterness, 'A man must lie to get himself believed.'

"Again I resolved that I would play up to the notion the public had formed of me, and, repeating my maxim 'that a man must lie to be believed,' I allowed myself to be appointed a teacher of history. Under the influence of this same maxim I founded the School of Accuracy, having my own opinions, which I communicated to no man, as to the nature of Truth.

"There is a kind of accuracy which has the office of chief handmaid in the house of lies. By the effrontery of its appeal to a fundamental delusion it wins the immediate assent of mankind; and it is responsible for more fiction than are all the romances in the world. This kind of accuracy the School accepted as its ideal, deceived by sophistries which are too familiar to need recital. But I, at least, was dimly aware that we were building our house on the sand. My conduct during the tenure of my

Professorship would indeed cause me some remorse in the retrospect, were it not that I am taking these present measures for informing the public of the true state of the case.

"But the situation was too complex to be altogether acceptable to a tender conscience. I had become an apostle of facts, but knew that of all things in this world 'facts' are the most mendacious. I longed for a public who would not misunderstand me. Until I can find it, thought I, there is no possibility of speaking the truth. So again I ran away. Why I did so may not be clear to those who still remain disciples in the School of Accuracy. But Divine Fictioners will understand.

"During the four years of solitude that followed I continued to meditate on the nature of Truth. The result was that I wrote the history of the world as a Drama in Five Acts.

"One day about the end of this time, as I was walking down a certain street, I noticed an empty hansom cab standing outside the door of a public-house. The cabman doubtless was inside that hostelry.

"As I passed the cab a voice from its empty interior called me distinctly by my name, 'Camelius, Camelius.'

"'Who are you?' I said, addressing the empty interior.

"'I am the Stage Prompter,' said the Voice. 'Step inside.'

"Oddly enough, I was not surprised, and without the least hesitation I obeyed the injunction of the Voice. At the same moment the cabman came out of the public-house and took his seat behind. 'Drive on, cabby,' said the Voice, 'till I tell you to stop.' And the hansom cab began to drive furiously all over the world.

"As soon as we were started my invisible companion said, 'Write.' Again I obeyed, and, taking out my notebook, I wrote down word for word, from the dictation of the Voice, the statement of principles which may be found in Leaflet No. 1—'The Essence of Divine Fictionism.'

"When he had finished dictating, the Voice said, 'Well done, Actor Camelius.' Then, the little door in the roof having opened of its own accord, he called to the cabman, 'Stop.' A moment later I found myself standing alone on the pavement at the very spot from which we had started. Cab and cabman had vanished.

"At the same instant a transport possessed me. It seemed that the whole universe had

become a stage. A bell was ringing, and a voice—the Voice of the Cab, I believe—was saying, 'Your turn, Camelius: don't miss the cue.'

"It was the hour of my conversion. The riddle of my life was solved. I perceived that I, who had written a Drama of the World, was myself a character in the Play."

I will not attempt to describe my state of mind on reading this document, but will only say that my feelings were such as a man must have when he enters with full consciousness upon a critical passage of his life. To solve the Camelius Enigma had been for years my chief ambition, and already I had made many contributions to the literature of the subject—all of them, as I now realised, miserably wide of the mark. As the self-revelation of Camelius unfolded before me I saw connective tissue gradually forming itself among the *disjecta membra* of his career; and when I came to the final passage about the hansom cab the confusion which had so long perplexed me suddenly vanished, and I felt myself in possession of a psychological unity, of a dramatic whole. I saw, moreover (may I confess it?), another picture—a picture of myself acclaimed

throughout the world, and famous in ages to come, as the discoverer of the long-sought secret. Believe me, I was exalted.

But then a sudden soberness came over me. "How," I asked myself, "can I ever succeed in conveying the secret to the public and obtaining credence for a story so strange? By what dramatic art can I convince an age little gifted with imagination that the man I am presenting is the real Camelius and not the creation of a dream? But no; I must not trust myself in this matter to the devices of literary art. I must proceed as a patient recorder of facts. I will collect evidence, procure further documents, take the names of witnesses, and above all have an interview with Camelius himself. I will remain in this city until I have gathered irrefragable testimony and all the material for a convincing narrative, a narrative capable of bearing the severest tests which the School of Accuracy can devise. I will play my part in a thoroughly convincing manner."

At the sound of these words—for I was talking to myself, a habit to which most unfortunately I am addicted—another train of thought awoke within me. "Yes," I continued, "*play your part.* And what if, after

all, you yourself turn out to be a character in a play?" And again the voice of my inner thought, which I had heard once already, uttered its warning. "Have a care," it said, "or these Divine Fictioners will convert you."

I looked at the clock. It was ten minutes to three, and I realised that I must be going. I went out, jumped into a street car, and a few moments later was standing on the steps of the Temple of Light.

The Temple of Light was arranged inside like a theatre. There was a fine auditorium and an ample stage screened by an imposing drop-curtain.

An immense crowd filled the auditorium to overflowing. Round the walls ran a line of standing figures, men and women closely packed together, perhaps two hundred in all. Among these I managed to wedge myself in, solidly supported by the wall behind.

Strange to say, I took at first but little interest in the scene around me; for a question preoccupied my mind. *Was I dreaming?* To make sure I knocked my head—which was the only part of my body I could move—several times, and not too gently, against the wall at my back. The test seemed to indicate that I was wide awake.

The knocks emitted an audible sound, and judge how startled I was to hear the same sound immediately taken up and repeated hundreds of times from every part of the building. Looking round I saw that the rows of standing figures were all in like manner knocking the back of their heads with a kind of rhythmical movement against the wall. Some were performing the exercise with great vigour, and I noticed one woman holding a large hat in her hands, who seemed to be hindered by a mass of hair forming a pad between her cerebellum and the wall; and I remember watching with interest the gradual disintegration of this bulky coiffure under the determined battery of the blows.

"This," thought I, "must be some element in the ritual of Divine Fictionism"; and turning to the man who was next to me I managed to whisper, "Why are you knocking your head against the wall?"

He seemed surprised at the question. "Guess you did it yourself a moment ago," he said.

"I wanted to make sure I was wide awake."

"Same with the rest of us," he replied. "It's the Exercise of the Neophytes. Service can't begin till we all know we're wide awake."

This piece of information set me thinking, and my thoughts were not pleasant. "You are caught in a trap, my friend," I reflected; "the atmosphere of this place is infectious; why else did you begin the Exercise of the Neophytes without prompting? You are doomed to be converted to a most silly and contemptible form of religion. Would that you had stayed at home! Would that you had never dabbled in the new religions of the United States! Ah, cursed spite, that a man as incapable as you are of aught but plain sailing should ever have allowed himself to become mixed up with the Camelius Enigma!"

All this time the sound of the knocking heads increased in volume; the reports grew more violent and followed one another in quicker succession; so loud and frequent, indeed, were the concussions that a battalion of riflemen might have been practising rapid fire in the neighbouring street. And I noticed, as an interesting detail, that the woman whose diligence in the Exercise I have just mentioned had finally overcome the difficulties of her coiffure. Her abundant hair was tumbled over her face and streaming down her back, and she was frantically banging her unprotected cranium against the wall.

Then the curtain rose. Instantly the heads ceased their knocking, the Neophytes sprang to attention, and the vast audience waited in breathless silence for Camelius to appear.

A moment later there stepped on to the stage a man I did not recognise. A murmur of surprise ran through the house.

The man on the stage was speaking. "Brother Actors," he said, "I have to make a joyful announcement. Actor Camelius has been transferred to a Higher Company. He was seized with a failure of the heart this morning, and died an hour ago, calling with his last breath on the name of a celebrated Actress."

"A celebrated *what*?" I asked of my neighbour, for I had not caught the last word.

"Actress," he replied.

"Ha!" I exclaimed. And I fell into a musing so profound that the matter of it has escaped my memory.

Thus it came to pass that I had no interview with Camelius.

* * * * *

To the best of my recollection the whole of the above narrative, as the reader now has it before him, was written out by me in the main cabin of the steamer which brought me

back across the Atlantic, being intended as the conclusion of my series of articles on the new religions of the United States. On reaching home I posted it to the editor, and a few days afterwards received a note from him asking me to see him in his office.

Arrived in the editorial presence, I saw at once from his manner that there was something wrong.

"I am in a difficulty about this last article of yours," he said. "*It's not convincing.* Am I to understand that this is a *bona fide* piece of work? I mean—is it quite genuine?"

"Entirely so," I answered.

"But—is Camelius a real person?"

"That I cannot tell," was my prompt reply. "But a voice within me seems to be saying that Camelius is 'only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages for existence and a name.'"

"What! You say that the article is genuine, and then, in the next breath, declare that you cannot tell whether Camelius is real. I don't understand."

These words of the editor nettled me greatly, and, needless to say, he was still more nettled by my reply.

"I undertook," I said, "to write a series of articles for your magazine. I did not undertake to provide the editor with a literary education."

"I decline all responsibility for the publication of this stuff!" he cried. And without more ado he flung the manuscript at my head.

As the missile passed through the air it seemed to increase enormously in bulk, and I felt like a man who is on the point of being overwhelmed by a falling mountain.

The mass was just about to strike and crush me to nothing, when there was a loud knock at the door.

"*Seven o'clock, sir*," said the voice of the Boots. "*Your shaving water is outside.*"

I sat up in bed, stared about me and rubbed my eyes. Having satisfied myself that I was wide awake, I resolved to send a report of the whole experience to the Society for Psychical Research. But the report was never sent.

II

"BRACKETED FIRST"[1]

THOSE who are unfamiliar with the ways of our University may learn with a gentle surprise that in the one subject which, from its nature, deals with Practice, the highest Degrees are obtainable without any Practical Examination whatsoever. That subject is Moral Science. Are you a candidate for Honours in mathematics? Then produce your instruments and draw an ellipse. In physiology? Decapitate this frog and dissect the brain while we are watching you. In botany? Put these seeds under the microscope and name the family-tree that bore them. In medicine? Go to yonder bedside, feel the patient's pulse and prescribe the dose. In short, show that you can *do* something without making a mess of it—or the Honours shall not be yours. But in Moral Science we have none of these tests. We ask you to

[1] Published originally in *Blackwood's Magazine.*

identify no specimens, to diagnose no malady, to compound no bolus, to probe no wound, to administer no viaticum to the departing soul. All that, we say, will come afterwards; it is not in our province; we teach you not *to do*, but *to think* what you are doing.

The events I am about to relate belong to a period—not so very long ago—when interest in speculative morals was keener in our University than it is to-day. Questions which have since grown stale and become provocative of yawns in the lecture-room were then in the ascendant. It was a time when a change of view concerning the ethical "end" might lead to the rupture of a friendship, when affinities concerning free-will would explain the sudden marriage of a young professor, and when undergraduates would debate the Greatest Happiness till two in the morning. Moral Science was no more practical then than now, but the theoretical enthusiasm was greater, and there was more German blood in our intellectual veins. The spirit of mockery had not yet appeared at the Hegelian council-board; you could quote Lotze without being considered a bore; Schopenhauer was still uneclipsed by Nietzsche; and there was no more sporting event in the academic

world than the yearly competition for the Kant Scholarship in Speculative Morals.

In the year when my story begins the competition for this Scholarship was unusually severe. That year, indeed, marks an illustrious date in the annals of Moral Science, as expounded in our University; we still talk of its glories in the Common Room, when we remember the great days of old, over our second glass of port. Nineteen candidates were in for the Scholarship; and there was not a feeble one among them. All of them have since won distinction; several, it must be added, have died on the field of battle.

Among the entrants for the Scholarship that year three stood out as the chief favourites. The candidate with the strongest backing was John Danvers, Scholar of St Rook's.

It is said that the sons of clergymen often turn out ill; we ought not to be surprised, therefore, if the sons of blackguards occasionally turn out well. At all events the father in this case was, or had been, a blackguard, and the son was turning out uncommonly well. Danvers was one of those young men, of whom there are more in the world than one might suspect, who deliberately set themselves the task of atoning before the world

for the sins of their fathers. What the particular sin of Danvers' father had been it concerns us not to know; enough that it had brought deep disgrace upon a family of honourable repute. He had disappeared and was reported to be dead; and since he had once been well known to many of us, and had numerous connections by kinship and marriage with members of the University, it was a point of prudence never to mention his name. Once only did John Danvers broach the matter to me. His father's turpitude, he told me, had furnished him with a knowledge of evil that was unique, and he was determined to find out a way of applying this knowledge to the service of the world, so that the world in the long-run would become better off through his exertions than it would have been had his father committed no crimes. "There must be a way of doing that," he said, "and I suspect that it lies in the direction of social service. A man who knows what I know is in an exceptionally strong position for dealing with such and such types of evil; and I am looking to Moral Science to help me in finding a way of turning this knowledge to good account." This explains why John Danvers, who was one of the blithest boys

imaginable, had turned his attention to Moral Science—a point otherwise hard to understand.

I confess I received his confidence on this matter with mingled feelings. For Danvers himself and his motives I felt nothing but admiration; but I knew enough of Moral Science to fear that some disappointment might await him in that quarter. Moral Science, as we cultivated it in those days, was not well adapted to meeting the needs of young men who were bent on atoning for the sins of their fathers. It was, as we have seen, avowedly, and perhaps somewhat pompously, theoretical; whereas John Danvers' designs in morality leaned to the practical side.

The candidate thought to have the second chance was Tom Pindar, descended from a long line of 'Varsity Dons. Of him my recollection is less distinct; at least, I remember him rather as a type than as an individual. He had a big body, a firm mouth, and a fine set of teeth; one of those clean-minded, upstanding young Britons of whom, I thank God, you may find a thousand in the University any day. One distinguishing peculiarity, however, I can recall. He had a habit of biting so hard on the mouthpiece of his tobacco-

pipe that neither wood, vulcanite, nor amber could resist him. He would often come with Danvers and others to smoke in my rooms, and we used to make small bets on the chance of Tom's mouthpiece lasting out to the end of the ritual. This it seldom did. Tom's manner was to stick his pipe in his mouth whenever he wanted to emphasise the points in his argument, and then, sure as fate, there would be a crash between his jaws, the pipe would fall on the floor, and we had to wait for the rest of the sentence until Tom had finished the process of spitting the splinters of amber into the coal-scuttle. In outward appearance he contradicted all one's notions of the professional moralist: none the less, he had the wisdom of the schools at his finger-ends; he was a great champion of the doctrine of "self-realisation," and could trounce a Utilitarian till he made him dance.

The third favourite for the Kant Scholarship was Madeleine Doughty. The third, I mean, with the general public. With me she was the first. Among the women—and several women always competed for the Kant Scholarship—she was acclaimed the most charming; but a few men backed her on other grounds. She was certainly gifted with intelligence

beyond the common; and, the combination of beauty and wit being highly prized in the University, there were not a few among the elder Dons who, whenever they saw Madeleine, had a notion of what they would do if they were twenty years younger.

Like Pindar, Madeleine Doughty lacked the outward seeming of a moral philosopher. What attracted her to this science was never known till the events were fully accomplished which I am about to relate. But I will so far anticipate as to say that Madeleine was distantly connected with Danvers, whom she had known from childhood, and fully cognisant of the circumstances of the family disgrace. And besides this she had managed to penetrate, by means which I shall leave to the imagination of the reader, into the secret of John Danvers' designs in respect of his father's crime. There is something about the idea of making atonement which has a peculiar attraction for noble women; whenever atoning work is afoot some Magdalen or Cordelia is sure to find it out and take a hand; and, to be more explicit, I believe that Madeleine Doughty had not only found out what Danvers was after, but was secretly preparing herself, in her own way, for participating in the young

man's enterprise. She was resolute as well as intelligent; and had made up her mind about some things which most girls at her age are content to leave in delightful uncertainty.

It was one of the rules of the examination for the Kant Scholarship that no candidate was allowed to write his name on the papers —they had numbers or pseudonyms, I forget which; but Miss Doughty's handwriting was peculiar, and I can tell you (being in the secret) that when the papers came in the first thing each of the examiners did was to pick out Madeleine's and stick them at the bottom of the pile, to be reserved as a *bonne bouche* till the last. Not that any of them had hopes for himself—they were all married men and moral philosophers to boot. But they were interested. They knew—everybody knew—that Danvers and Pindar were both desperately in love with Madeleine.

How desperately you may judge from the following incident. On the morning the trial began the janitor received instructions (from a certain person) to interpose opaque pieces of furniture in the examination room along the lines of vision which connected Madeleine with the two men. They put Madeleine behind what was virtually a screen; which

proves that, despite their philosophy, the examiners were men of the world and knew all about it.

We had heard also—for a University has some of the properties of a whispering gallery—that Madeleine was willing to marry either Danvers or Pindar, and would have given her hand to whichever of the pair had made the first decided move. There was also another story whose originator, if I remember rightly, was a little coach named Merlin, a man with a club-foot, whom some of us had observed making eyes through his spectacles at Madeleine. He gave it out that Madeleine had decided to have neither of the young men; that each of them had proposed and been rejected, because Madeleine would not inflict suffering on the other by accepting the one. This story I never believed; it was not in human nature. Besides, its source was tainted and watery. I know as a fact that neither Danvers nor Pindar ever proposed to Madeleine Doughty.

Such were the three favourites for the Kant Scholarship in Speculative Morals. It only remains for me to add that Danvers and Pindar were bosom friends—old schoolfellows, comrades of the football field, and loyal to each other with a loyalty beyond the love of women.

They were humble-minded too, as the loyal always are; each unconscious of his own fine qualities, but convinced that the other was just the finest fellow in the world. And thus it was that both of them were hanging back in the affair of Madeleine. It was a strife of mutual self-renunciation. "Go in and win her, Pin!" said the one; "she's far too good for me." "Go in and win her, Dan!" said the other; "I'm not nearly good enough for her." And the result was that neither of them "went in."

How is it, I have often asked myself, that not one of us wiseacres who were conducting the examination for the Kant Scholarship had the perspicacity to see that here was a golden opportunity for introducing the Practical Test into the teaching of Moral Science, thereby earning immortal honours for our University as the initiator of a great reform? Why, instead of plying them up to the last moment with questions as to the Universality of Moral Law, which all three answered to equal admiration, did we not put the matter to the touch at the very point where the Particular was thrust under our noses? Just consider what we might have done! After disposing of the other sixteen candidates we might have said

to our three young friends: "Go into the next room all three of you and stay there for an hour or less; settle your little affair by the application of Kantian or any other recognised principles of Morality; prove thus your capacity for Moral Decision and then return. No award to be made until the wedding bells begin to ring." It was strange that none of us thought of this practical test, the opportunity for which had been providentially thrown in our way. As it was, we followed the usual methods, awarding the scholarship, after long debate, to Madeleine Doughty, whose "essay" was extraordinarily brilliant. Its subject, chosen out of four alternatives, was "Courage as the Basis of Morality," treated in a manner by no means complimentary to Kant. The "essays" of Danvers and Pindar were on "self-sacrifice." They were distinguished by great knowledge of authorities, extreme subtlety of analysis, and profound deference to Kant; but both ending abruptly, just short of the conclusion, we were compelled to mark them with an "alpha minus." Never did examiners take more conscientious pains with their business. But I cannot escape an uncomfortable feeling that we might have had something serious to answer for. No

thanks to us that things did not go utterly wrong. No thanks to us that Madeleine is not married to Merlin and that Danvers and Pindar did not become monks.

Thus it was, then, that the examiners, acting in their official capacity, lost their chance. But Powers, which have no official status in the University, were at work, and the omission was soon made good. These Powers had a further examination in store for Danvers, Pindar, and Madeleine Doughty; and, needless to say, *their* programme had been drawn up on strictly practical lines.

The practical test came about a year after the award of the Kant Scholarship; and you may take it as incidental witness to the Perversity of Things that this far more difficult examination was launched upon our young friends on the very evening when the list of Final Honours in the School of Moral Science was posted in the Senate House—almost at the moment, that is to say, when the three were congratulating one another on having done with Examinations for ever!

Who that has been through the mill needs reminding of that scene? Let the readiest writer describe it and his pen will make blots.

Let the soundest sleeper recall it in the night watches and he will lie awake for an hour. We are in the Vestibule of the Senate House. A jabbering crowd of youths and maidens who move distractedly; groups formed and instantly dissolved; dark shadows under eyes that are glittering with excitement or apprehension; cold fingers and damp palms—this is what we see, this is what we feel. There is a nervous tension in the air; the walls are tremulous; the marble flags rock under the feet; voices, high-pitched and jerky, break forth and run about like sudden fractures in a field of ice. All at once the babble ceases: a man in a chocolate uniform and a gold-laced hat is fixing something on the wall; nothing is heard save the sound of hurrying feet and the rustle of women's skirts. The whole crowd has melted into a solid lump of human backs, massed against the wall; it seems to hang upon the notice-board as by a peg. So for half a minute it hangs; then a right-about face in both directions, and the lump has dissolved itself into a multiplicity of chattering units. The victors are suppressing their elation; the disappointed are passing it off; the broken are speaking with a smile that turns into a grin; backs are being slapped; consolations are being

offered. "Just what we expected," somebody is saying, "Danvers, Doughty, and Pindar bracketed together at the head of the list."

That evening, I well remember, was dark, wet, and tempestuous. As I walked to the Senate House to learn the result, I noticed a number of woebegone individuals hanging about the neighbourhood, men selling bootlaces, women with a basket of flowers on one arm and a baby on the other, and here and there the vendors of more cunning merchandise —an Oriental with a barrow of tortoises, a man with three pet dogs led by a string, a Prima Donna of the streets singing to the accompaniment of a harp. Through some strange leakage of information the begging fraternities are always well posted as to the internal arrangements of our University.

Among the first to come forth from the Senate House was Danvers, his high spirits well under control. As he passed through the swinging door he turned round to shout his thanks to someone who was congratulating him from the throng behind. "A bit of luck," he added, "just a fluke!" Then he stood for a moment looking at the rain, which was coming down in torrents. He heard a fine

voice singing, and looking round for the cause he saw the Prima Donna standing beside the harpist under the shelter of a shop-front. They were half-way through *La ci darem*, and the notes seemed to Danvers like an echo of music in his own soul. Then something happened which gave him a shock. A mass of rain-water, which had collected in the awning above the shop-front, suddenly burst through and splashed full on the singer, extinguishing the song; and the Prima Donna, followed by the harpist, bolted into the shop. "Poor devil!" thought Danvers. "That's hard lines! I suppose some people would call it funny. A pretty woman, with a nice frock on, too. I hope the people will be decent to her in the shop. She must be soaked to the skin."

Thinking thus, he was in the act of putting up his umbrella, when a man, clad in a frowsy overcoat, and little else, the rain streaming from his hat, stepped up to him and said: "Beg your pardon, sir, but could you give a poor chap the price of a meal and a bed? I've walked twenty-eight miles to-day, sir, and not had a bite of food since last night."

Danvers' right hand dived into his trousers pocket, and a shilling was already between his

fingers when a thought checked the movement. The thought was too fugitive to be quite articulate; like the faint backwash of a receding tide it just broke and rippled over the margin of consciousness. "There's some connection," the thought seemed to be saying, "between Moral Science and the position in which you are suddenly placed by the appeal of this man! What *is* the connection, John Danvers?"

The thought, unformed and swift as it was, caused Danvers to hesitate. Whatever the connection might be, precipitate action was not quite the thing for a man who had just been bracketed first in Moral Science—a man, moreover, who had come within an ace of that bluest of blue ribbons, the Kant Scholarship. He was being taken unawares. One ought to reflect before acting. Otherwise one is a humbug.

Not many days before he had scored heavily on one of the papers in answer to a question which required him to weigh the respective merits of "reflective and unreflective Morality." He had shown (*maxima cum laude*) that the reflective sort is by far the superior article, supporting his argument by citations from the greatest authorities, including several terse

passages of Aristotle, all reproduced in faultlessly accented Greek. Moreover, he had proved to the satisfaction of the examiners that he knew the virtue of Benevolence up and down, from its measly adolescence in pagan ethics to its white-winged maturity under the Christian Law. He had analysed that virtue into its ultimate constituents; he had described the dunghill on which it was born and the golden palace it inhabits now; nay more, while dissecting the roots whence Benevolence springs, he had discovered a root unmentioned in any of the text-books—a sign of originality which the examiners, always hospitable to such discoveries, had been quick to welcome, one of them actually saying to his colleagues that the point was "quite interesting." Which remark the examiner concluded with a yawn. The poor man had read thirty-seven essays on Benevolence that day.

While these reverberations were shaking his mind, Danvers, I say, hesitated; and the shilling, which had not yet seen the light, slipped from between his fingers and rejoined its comrades at the bottom of his trousers pocket. The tramp, whose hearing for such things was abnormally acute, heard the jingle of the coin, and, correctly interpreting the

sound, muttered an unspeakable word under his breath.

"Look here," said Danvers, "I don't give money to beggars on the street. You know it's illegal to ask. You'd get into trouble if the police saw you. You'd better go to the Casual Ward."

"Thank you, sir," said the tramp, speaking in a voice which seemed an excellent imitation of the peculiar intonation we acquire, or cultivate, in the University. "I am always attracted by the Casual Ward, sir. It's a place both of comfort and refinement, and may be compared with the best London clubs. But unfortunately, sir, the Casual Ward is closed at this time of night."

"Then try the Salvation Army Shelter. You'll find it by going down that street and taking the first to the left. And come round to my rooms to-morrow morning and I'll give you a ticket for the Charity Organisation Society and have your case investigated."

Danvers felt that he would really like to investigate this case.

"Thank you again," answered the tramp, taking off his hat, and artfully aiming the water that streamed from its brim upon Danvers' boots. "Thank you exceedingly.

I was hoping you would say that, sir: in fact, it was only my modesty which prevented me asking for a ticket at the first. I will certainly call upon you to-morrow morning. Will you be kind enough to name the hour and the place?"

"Come round to St Rook's College at eleven o'clock and ask for Mr Danvers. I'll tell the porter to show you to my room."

The man had large, prominent eyes; and he scrutinised Danvers up and down. Then, with the coolest insolence, he extended his dirty palm and said—

"Shake hands, Mr Danvers. I'm glad to meet you."

Danvers stepped back a pace. "I like your impudence," he said. "But you can't play that game with me, so don't try it on! However, come round to-morrow morning, and I'll do as I said."

"Punctually at eleven, Mr Danvers, I shall be at St Rook's. But may I venture to point out to you, sir, a little fact which has possibly escaped your observation? I think you perceive, sir, that I am very hungry now; but have you reflected that at eleven to-morrow morning I shall be *hungrier still*, and perhaps in a state of exhaustion so extreme as to be

unable to take advantage of your wisely deferred benevolence? These things don't stand still, sir."

Danvers turned away; he was bewildered, and had had enough. "This," he thought, "is a begging impostor—one of those rascals who study their parts like actors preparing for the stage. I've heard they rehearse 'em in thieves' kitchens and criticise one another."

But in spite of the worldly wisdom hidden in this thought Danvers' mind was not at ease. He was not sure of himself. He felt like a man who had just been bathing out of his depth and had a panic, and is now swimming to shore, afraid to face his companions who are laughing at him on the beach. Or it was as if a nasty collision had taken place between things which had no business to be on the same road; as if an Ideal had forsaken the lines laid down for it and had been run into and tragically damaged by a Reality. "What ought I to have done?" he kept asking himself. "Am I an ass?"

I have heard of a drastic Institution where punctually at six in the morning the Head Physician touches an electric button, and instantly every patient is rolled out of his warm bed into a cold bath. John Danvers

had just had a taste of this treatment: from the warm Honours of Moral Science he had been shot straight into the cold water of Moral Fact.

He was now on his way to the Post Office —to send a telegram to his mother and two sisters announcing that he was bracketed first in Moral Science with Pindar and "a girl." He had resolved to put it in that way.

But the image of the tramp persisted in his memory and troubled him sorely. "What is the matter with me?" he kept asking. "Have I betrayed my principles?"

Before he reached his rooms he had formed a resolution to restate the whole occurrence in terms of Moral Science, judge what he had done in the light of First Principles, and by their means lay down a definite plan of action which would save him from being taken unawares on any future occasion when he might be accosted by a tramp. And incidentally he would make up his mind as to the action he ought to take at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning. He would not be caught napping again by tramps.

Danvers, on arriving at his rooms, composed himself to think. Had he done right or wrong

in refusing the shilling to the tramp? Did it square with his own theory of Benevolence as expounded in the Essay? Did it illustrate that theory? Did it square with, illustrate, confirm or refute any theory whatsoever—Hobbes, Butler, Kant, Mill, Sidgwick, Green? Would any one of them, or all of them together, condemn or approve what he had done? These were his problems.

For a half-hour or more he worried over them, leaning back in his arm-chair and smoking three successive pipes as an aid to reflection. He recalled what the great Authorities had said about Benevolence; he recalled his own theory. Then it was as if the ghosts of all the Moral Philosophers had been summoned into the room, and there they sat, round the table, like a Royal Commission investigating the problem. Volumes of wisdom poured from their lips, but it flowed off into space and seemed to miss the mark. They argued, they wrangled, they disagreed, they could draw up no Report. They talked of Abstract Principles and Concrete Cases; but a point of contact was nowhere to be found between what they were *saying* and what he, John Danvers, had just *done*. The deeper they went the more did his peculiar trouble

pass out of their sight. They talked of "the poor" and how "the poor" ought to be treated; of the "problem of poverty" and how it ought to be solved: but all this failed somehow to reach that uncomfortable spot in Danvers' soul whence sprang the feeling that he was an ass. *Their* tramps were all in the plural, *his* was in the singular; those were a class, this an individual. Their tramps were all on paper; his was on the Senate House steps. Their tramps were odourless; his was not. Theirs had no eyes; his had,—eyes that looked at you in a very disconcerting way and haunted you afterwards. And—greatest difference of all—*their* tramps gave no trouble; they remained quiet, passive, invisible, while the experts were deciding what to do with them; and they were heard of no more from the moment that wisdom had issued its award. But *his* tramp thrust himself under your nose, tipped water on your boots, answered back with a dash of vinegar in his speech, offered to shake hands, and was coming round at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning to see you again.

Danvers began to walk about the room. "What ought I to have done?" he kept asking. "Ought I to have given the fellow

a shilling? I'm dashed if I know. And what ought I to do when he comes round to-morrow morning? I'm dashed if I know. I wish I could consult Madeleine."

As he said the words Pindar entered the room.

"What's this you're dashed if you know and want to consult Madeleine about?" said Pindar.

"A serious affair. I've had a nasty experience to-night—a tragic collision, my boy—and the end of it is that I'm haunted by the ghost of a tramp, and I'm trying to place him in some kind of intelligible context. And not a common tramp either. A fellow with awful eyes. Looked like a 'Varsity Don dressed up for the part."

"Oh!" said Pindar. "A tramp! Chalk him on the blackboard, old man. I'm interested."

Danvers, with commendable brevity, told his story and sketched the problem he was trying to solve. "And I'm not going to bed," he concluded, "until I've settled the matter. Have I done right or wrong? Help me to thrash it out. Just before you came in I'd got myself tied up in a tangle of most infernal nonsense. Open your mouth, man; discourse and clear the air."

"Wait a bit," answered Pindar, "till we have a full statement of the facts."

"I've given you a full statement."

"No, you haven't. There's more behind—something you don't know. I saw and heard the whole thing on the Senate House steps; and what's more, I saw what happened after you went away. Madeleine is in the play, my boy!"

"Great Scot! you don't say so!" exclaimed Danvers.

"Yes. Listen. As you went down the steps, Madeleine came out of the door. And the tramp accosted her in exactly the same words he had used to you."

"The blackguard!" cried Danvers. "Just fancy that dirty brute speaking to *her*! Stinking of whisky, too! He'd try to frighten her! I wish I'd given him in charge!—Well, what did she do?"

"Gave him a shilling like a shot, and then talked to him for five minutes. I didn't hear what she said. But she wasn't frightened a bit."

"She never is," said the other. "But, I say—do you think she saw me turn him down?"

"She did."

"Confusion!" cried Danvers. "But how do you know?"

"Because she spoke of it afterwards. We walked home together. But keep your hair on, Dan. There are more facts to come. I took a hand in the business myself."

"What did *you* do?"

"What it might have been wiser not to do."

"Like most things! Can't recognise it at that. Name the action. What was it?"

"I gave the man another shilling—without being asked."

"You idiot!" cried Danvers. "If the tramp isn't already mad drunk and kicking some woman to death it's no fault of yours and Madeleine's. But why did *you* give him a shilling?"

"Because Madeleine did. Don't be an ass, Dan. You'd have done the same thing yourself, you know you would! And what's more, you'd give a tidy sum to have played my part instead of your own."

"By Gad, I would!"

"And then repent of it!"

"I don't know: but go on. What happened next?"

"I walked home with Madeleine, as I said. For some time she didn't speak. At last she

stopped suddenly, and looking me straight between the eyes asked the very question you asked just now. 'Why did you give the tramp another shilling?' 'Because *you* gave him one,' I answered. 'I detest being imitated,' says she, and looks as fierce as a button. 'Well,' says I, 'I wanted to do the same as you.' And didn't she just flare up when I said that! 'You muffin!' says she, 'it wasn't the *same*! I was the *first* to do it. A thing can't be done for the first time twice over!' 'Madeleine,' says I, 'it's all rot my being bracketed first with you. I ought to have been ploughed.' 'So you ought!' says she, and flounced away without another word, leaving me feeling like an idiot. Dan, there's a spice of the devil in Madeleine."

"You've been a long time finding that out," said Danvers. "But I'll tell you what all this will come to. Madeleine will have neither of us. She'll marry that little Johnny with the club-foot and the spectacles—what's his name? —Merlin. We've both cut a poor figure over this affair, Pin."

"We have," said Pindar, and then added, after a pause, "I wish I had been *ploughed*!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean there's a lot of *pity* in that girl.

She's compassionate, Dan; you could see it when she was talking to the tramp; it's the keynote of her temperament. I lay three to one that Merlin knocks both of us out with that club-foot of his. I wish we had club-feet. At least I wish *I* had!"

"Yes, it might smooth the way. You are right about pity, though. Do you know the best run either of us ever had with Madeleine was when she knocked us over the Kant Scholarship? She was awfully sorry for us that night, and either of us might have had her for the asking. She as good as told me so. Another time was when I got that sock in the mouth at the 'Varsity match. 'Poor old chap!' says she next day; and I'd have proposed there and then if I hadn't had three front teeth knocked out, and made such a horrid splutter when I talked. But, dash it, I believe she'd have taken me, splutter and all! However, it's up with us now! Merlin has the ball! What with all three being bracketed first, and then this tramp mess coming on the top of that, we haven't the ghost of a chance."

The two men smoked away in silence. Presently Danvers said—

"Pin, I'm going to cut the knot—it's the

only way. My mind's made up. I resign Madeleine to you! You're far the better man."

"And I resign her to you! You're worth six of me. My mind's made up too."

"There we are again!" said Danvers. "Another deadlock! We get no forrarder! And the end of it all will be that that little beast with the club-foot will have her. It makes no difference whether the two dogs quarrel over the bone, or each politely insist that the other shall have it. It's only another sort of fight, and the third dog gets the bone all the same. One of us two must cut the knot. Now, who is it to be?"

Danvers waited for an answer. There was none. Suddenly an inspiration seized him, and he jumped from his chair. "I have it!" he cried. "Eureka! There's only one way out. Pin, my hearty, *we shall have to fight!* The fates have decreed it. We're bracketed first with Madeleine. And I've suddenly seen what the Fates mean by it. They mean that we must *fight* for her!"

Pindar rose, went to the fire, and began poking it with Danvers' walking-stick. Then he became interested in a piece of old china on the mantel-shelf, and turned it upside

down to examine the marks. He was evidently deep in thought. At last he said—

"You're right, Dan. We shall have to fight. But we are not going to fight with our fists. We are going to fight with weapons of reason—but gloves off all the same, mind you."

"Precisely what I meant," said Danvers. "How could I mean anything else?"

"Right-ho! we go back to the tramp and his shilling right away. That's the ring. Who was right, you or I, or both, or neither of us? We settle that question before we go to bed. We're a pair of humbugs if we can't. So here's the bargain. *The man who is proved to have done right shall have Madeleine. The man who is proved to have done wrong shall give her up.*"

"But suppose we don't agree?"

"We ought to agree. If we can't, again I say we are a pair of humbugs, equally unworthy of Madeleine, and Merlin takes up the running?"

"But suppose we do agree, and conclude that *both* of us were right—or wrong?"

"Then, by the powers, we'll toss up a halfpenny and let the gods decide the issue!"

"It's a sporting proposition right through,"

said Danvers eagerly, "and won't it just appeal to Madeleine when she hears about it? She shall know it was your suggestion."

"No, it was yours!"

"Never mind that. It will appeal to Madeleine anyhow. Only last week she said that next to lawn-tennis conduct is the most sporting thing in life. That's the only trouble with Madeleine! She's never serious about morality. But she's a deuced sight better girl than many who are."

"And a deuced sight prettier too!" added Pindar.

"She's *fast*, Pin, *fast*, I tell you. No, you blockhead, I don't mean fast in *that* sense! Of course not. I mean quick, easy, swift, ambidextrous, and all that—just as she plays lawn-tennis. Cuts in, serves 'em red-hot, and scores a point while the rest of us are pulling long faces at one another! Look how she handled that mess of Smithers and Haply! Cut the blackguard Smithers clean out of the show, brought the authorities round, and headed Haply off just as he was going to make an ass of himself—all in one stroke, mind you, and quick as lightning. There's a lot of righteousness in *speed*, Tom Pindar—a lot, take my word for it! I've *seen* it in

Madeleine. That's the point that Kant and his Johnnies have missed, though I believe it's in Aristotle, if the text was properly restored. But I'm talking shop. Let's go back to the fight. We'll make a proper duel of it—with moral principles for the weapons, and the cleverest and sweetest girl in England for the prize. Marriage by combat! Splendid! Primitive methods translated into higher forms: unity of idea amid diversity of ritual—and all that! It will become historic, Pin! It will make us famous, Pin! And we'll be serious. No jokes, and no quarter. No self-renouncing motives. In short, we'll play the game."

"We will," chimed in Pindar. "And what do you say to having a bit on? I suggest a fiver."

"Done. Each man backs himself for five pounds. Stakes on the table right away! And the whole ten pounds to go towards the purchase of Madeleine's engagement ring—which is going to cost at least fifty if the luck turns my way."

"Agreed. That's a great idea. It'll help to make a straight fight of it. It'll put the stopper on the self-renouncing business—the thing I'm most afraid of."

"Same here," said Danvers, as he placed a

little pile of sovereigns on the top of Pindar's bank-note. "But what about an umpire? I say, it's a pity we can't get the tramp. I'd like him to be judge."

"Bosh!" shouted Pindar. "We want somebody who knows Moral Science. I say, what about Madeleine?"

"Couldn't get her; though she'd enjoy it, and make a ripping good judge too. Only she'd make fun of us—the little demon! And I tell you we are going to have no nonsense about this."

"No nonsense be the word!" cried the other. "We'll have to do without an umpire. It's going to be a duel at midnight, in a lonely forest, with no seconds, and none save the survivor to tell the tale. And now to business! Up, Guards, and at 'em! Sock 'em, boys! We'll begin as two Greeks and imagine we've just put the case of the tramp before Socrates. And from that we'll gradually work up to a modern point of view."

At that moment the clock on Danvers' mantelpiece struck ten—and at it they went. I shall not enlighten the reader with the full text of the argument that followed. It was rapid, concentrated, and exhausting. At 10.40 the combatants refreshed themselves with a

draught of plain soda and a pinch of snuff. This warmed them to their work, and the sword-play became magnificent. Subtle strokes were delivered which split the living hairs as they grew on the combatants' heads. There were moments when it ceased to be a duel and became an orgy—an orgy of fine distinctions, a debauch of profundities. When midnight struck, every authority from Socrates to Nietzsche had been cited; but neither Danvers' shilling nor his friend's could yet claim to have the Moral Order behind it. Towards 1 A.M. there was a set-back. They discovered that the problem of Madeleine had become mixed up with the problem of the tramp. Thereupon the two things had to be disentangled, and this carried them back to a point considerably behind that from which they had started. But nothing could daunt them, and by two o'clock they had recovered most of the lost ground. Then it was proposed that before going further they should review the ground traversed and summarise results. This being accomplished, it appeared that, so far as the argument had gone, the weight of probability was against Pindar. He had acted "weakly"—so they agreed—in following the lead of Madeleine, and "blindly" in supposing

he was doing "the same" as she. Nothing equally flagitious had been set down to Danvers' account.

"I admit," said Pindar, "that the argument is going against me, though I still have a fighting chance. You scored on 'the Whole' and on 'the Good'; but I shall head you off yet on 'the Beautiful.' But give me a breather first. Hand that lemon this way and let's have another smoke. Meanwhile, I'll tell you a funny thing, Dan. From the moment I gave the shilling, I've felt perfectly comfortable about what I did. And now that the argument is going against me, I feel more comfortable than ever. Even if I am definitely proved in the wrong, as I may be, I shall not feel one bit ashamed of myself."

"I'll cap that," said Danvers. "I've felt horribly ashamed of myself from the very first. If I hadn't felt such a mean beggar, and been so deucedly anxious to argue the feeling away, some of my best points would never have occurred to me. And the more my case has strengthened, the meaner I feel myself to be. I've been having a thin time ever since we began. And now I'm getting into a blue funk! If I win I shall never have the pluck to face Madeleine. She'd wither me up!"

"By Jove, Dan," cried Pindar with a start, "that bears on the case. Man, we've forgotten something! *The distinction between Subjective and Objective Right!* We must begin again and revise the whole argument in the light of that distinction."

"It's too late; I'm dead tired, and my form's leaving me," said Danvers.

Pindar jumped to his feet and pitched the lemon skin into the fire. "Hang it all!" he cried. "Let's toss the halfpenny and have done for ever with the whole blessed thing!"

"It's an awful come-down, considering the place we won in the Exams," interposed Danvers. "The halfpenny's a confession of failure. A confession of monstrous, shameful, asinine failure! But sooner or later we shall come to something of the sort. I foresee we shall; and the sooner the better. But it means two things: first, we're a brace of humbugs; second, Merlin takes the bun."

"Merlin be blowed!" said Pindar. "I'll knock his ugly little head off. Dan,—no more blether! Here's a halfpenny. Best of three! Up she goes! Now then—heads or tails?" And he held out his two hands, palm to palm, under Danvers' nose.

"I won't call—not yet," was the answer.

"We are at the Rubicon, old man; and I'm not going to cross till I've had five minutes to gather my moral forces. I may need 'em all. So may you."

"Five minutes and no more," he continued as they resettled themselves in the big arm-chairs. "Look at the clock. Be ready for the moment when I drop the handkerchief. Then out with your halfpenny and toss her up!"

There was deep silence for three minutes, broken only by the hypnotic ticking of the timepiece. Both men were visibly trembling, their eyes glued on the clock face. There was no sign that the moral forces were gathering: both seemed verging towards collapse. As the hand of the clock touched the fourth minute, Pindar, strong man as he was, actually screamed, and was on the point of going into hysterics when Danvers, who had been sitting with his eyes half closed, started to his feet and uttered a loud cry.

"By Heaven," he shouted, "*there's Madeleine!*"

"Madeleine?" cried the other in a voice that was still half a scream, "Madeleine! Where? At the door? At the window? What, man! You don't mean she's here at this time of night?"

"No, no!" gasped Danvers. "A vision! I've seen her! Seen her as plain as I see you standing there! Seen her in her room at St Cheek's—with your photograph, and my photograph,—and Merlin's too, by Gad—on the mantelpiece."

"Get out! You're crazy!"

"No, I'm not. It's a telepathic communication. Not the first either. I've seen her, Pin, just as she is this minute. And—man alive!—what do you think she's doing?"

"Go on! How should I know?"

"*Tossing a halfpenny, my boy!* Tossing a halfpenny, Tom Pindar! Where are we now? Hoo!" Danvers' voice had become a mere moan of wind.

"And what if Madeleine's toss doesn't agree with ours?"

"Then there'll be the deuce to pay all over again."

"And what if Madeleine has had a vision and seen *us* tossing?"

"Then she takes Merlin."

"But what if she was tossing for Merlin?"

"She wasn't. She never once looked at his photograph."

"But what if it's all hallucination?"

"It isn't: it's a fact."

"*What's* a fact? That Madeleine was tossing, or that you thought she was?"

"Pindar, you're an ass."

"Danvers, we're both asses. But never mind, old man. We've both got Firsts: that's the main thing. We ought to have rung off long ago. Let's go to bed. See you to-morrow morning."

For a time no more was said, and Pindar began putting on his overcoat, for the storm still raged outside. As he was passing out of the door, Danvers spoke.

"Wait a second, Pin. What am I to do when the tramp turns up in the morning? I meant to think that out."

Scarcely had Danvers spoken these words when a violent buffet of wind smote the building, blew open the casement and extinguished the candles on the table. An acrid odour, from the smouldering wicks perhaps, filled the room.

"Bah!" said Danvers, as he struck a match, "what's the matter with these candles? The room smells like a charnel-house. But, I say, what am I to do about the tramp?"

"A hundred to one he won't turn up; they never do," answered the other.

"He's turning up all the time," said Danvers.

"I can't keep him out of my mind. There's something queer about that chap. What do you think he said to me when I turned him down? '*These things don't stand still, sir!*'"

"There's nothing in that," said Pindar. "So long!" And he went away.

When he was gone Danvers suddenly remembered something, and rushing to the window he popped his head out, and called to Pindar, who was now crossing the Quad.

"I say, Pin, what about that ten pounds?"

"Bet's off, of course," shouted Pindar. "Keep my stake till to-morrow morning, So long, again!"

Danvers slept ill that night, as one might expect. His dreams were haunted by the tramp, who was sometimes tossing halfpennies for Danvers' soul. And at every toss he would say, "These things don't stand still." Just before waking this dream melted into another. He dreamt that he was being drilled, with a rifle in his hand. And the drill sergeant kept repeating something which Danvers, in waking experience, had heard him say many times. "Remember, genl'men, that in real war you 'ave to fire at a runnin' targit. And don't forget that the runnin' targit has a gun as well as you. Be prepared for the target to fire back

at you, genl'men, and take cover accordin'. These things don't stand still."

At eleven o'clock next morning Danvers was again in his sitting-room, waiting doubtfully for the tramp. No tramp came. At a quarter past eleven he gave him up, and taking the morning's paper began to read. In a column headed "Notes and News" his eye was caught by the following paragraph :—

"Shortly after twelve o'clock last night, in High Street, a man was picked up by a policeman in a state of helpless intoxication. Soon after reaching the police station it was seen that the man's condition was serious. The doctor was immediately sent for, but before his arrival death had taken place. The only garments on the body, which was much emaciated, were an old overcoat and pair of trousers. From the contents of his pockets the police are of opinion that the man had seen better days, and they are not without hope that he may be identified. It appears that he was begging last night outside the Senate House, and several persons were seen to give him money. With this he evidently indulged in a drinking-bout, the result of which, in his famished condition, proved fatal."

When Danvers read this paragraph he turned sick at heart. His first clear impulse was to find Pindar and show him the news. He was just about to leave the room on this errand, when a step sounded on the stone staircase, and somebody tapped at the door. "Here's the tramp after all," thought Danvers, "the dead man must be another."

The next moment he saw he was mistaken. The person who entered the room was an Inspector of Police.

"Sorry to trouble you, sir," said the Inspector. "From what we've heard it's thought you can help in identifying a man who died in the cells last night—a tramp who was found drunk in the streets."

"I've just read about it in the paper," said Danvers. "All I know about the man, if he's the same, is that he asked me for money in the street, which I refused. From the way he talked he seemed to have had some education."

"There's other evidence of that, sir. But what made us think you might know something about him is that *we found your visiting-card in his pocket.*"

"My visiting-card!" exclaimed Danvers. "I gave him no card."

"He had it, sir. At least he had a card with 'John Danvers' on it, and the name of this College in the corner."

"Impossible!"

"Well, I'll own it's strange. It's a very dirty card, sir, and seems to have been in his pocket a long time. I have it here."

"Great God!" cried Danvers, turning as white as a sheet. "Show me the card."

The Inspector produced the card. It was as he said. On a filthy bit of pasteboard was the name "John Danvers" and "St Rook's College" in the corner. The young man staggered, and the Inspector, thinking he would faint, rushed across the room to support him. Sinking into a chair he covered his face with his hands, rocked his body to and fro, and simply moaned, "Oh, my God!" The Inspector, who was not unprepared, remained silent till Danvers uncovered his face.

"It's a painful thing, sir, no doubt. But I'm afraid you'll have to go through with the identification. Better get it over at once."

"Yes. Come along." Danvers put on his hat. As he walked with the Inspector through the streets the words of the tramp kept ringing in his ears—"*These things don't stand still.*" Presently he said—

"Am I the only witness to this identification?"

"No, sir. There's one more. A Miss Doughty from the Ladies' College."

"Oh, horror! Is that necessary? What has she to do with it? She knows nothing."

"Well, we are not sure. She was seen talking to the man for some time last night, and it's thought he may have told her something which may be useful in evidence. She's one of those that gave him money. A great mistake, sir, to give money to——" but the Inspector checked himself, and did not finish the sentence.

They came to the police station. Several persons were waiting outside. Danvers looked round to see if Madeleine was among them. She was not there. As he passed through the corridors, he thought, he feared, that he might see her. He did not.

He was taken into the mortuary. There, on the middle of a long table, otherwise unoccupied, was a stretcher, and on the stretcher a human shape outlined under a sheet. There was nothing else in the room.

They placed Danvers in front of the stretcher and removed the sheet. And he stood there, still as any figure cut in stone, gazing at what lay before him.

For several minutes he stood thus. Then, speaking in a calm voice, he said—

"*That is the body of my father.* He disappeared years ago, and none of us have seen him since—till now. The card was his own. He was once a member of my College. He was—well, never mind what he was."

He did not break down. He showed no haste to turn away. He was like a man gazing at his image in a mirror. For there before him he saw a face like his own, aged and degraded, but also with marks of unutterable suffering, sternly emphasised and even ennobled by the touch of death.

"Yes," he said again, "that is my father."

As he repeated these words he trembled for the first time. At the same instant something touched him, and, behold, an arm tightly linked within his own. He felt no surprise. He did not even turn his head to see who it was. He *knew*; and it was as if he felt behind him the shelter of a great rock.

"Come away," said Madeleine. "It is enough!"

Arm-in-arm they two went out. As they walked thus along the crowded streets they passed acquaintances and college friends; saw

their smiles and knew what they were saying, thinking. They were unabashed.

For some time neither of them spoke a word. Then they began their first lovers' talk.

"These things don't stand still," said Danvers. Madeleine's answer was to tighten the arm that was linked in his.

"We were both right," she said.

"We are both right *now*," he answered; and again he felt the pressure tighten on his arm.

"It's the one thing in the world that is *infallibly* right," said Madeleine.

"Yes. It's the only way out. Madge, I've learnt more Moral Science in the last half-hour than all the universities in the world could ever teach me."

"You don't call *this* Moral Science?" said Madeleine; and she looked up at him with a smile that was half a reproach.

"By God, I do! It's the only sort that leads anywhere."

"Where is it leading you and me?"

"I don't know and don't wish to know. I'm content with the place it has led us to already. But it *leads*, Madge, it *leads*—that's the point."

They fell silent and walked on. You see,

both of them had been taught to *think*. Presently Madeleine said—

"Dan, dear boy, you've been in deep waters to-day."

"I have. And so have you."

"Yes; that's the beauty of it."

"*What?*" cried Danvers; and, heedless of the street traffic, he stopped suddenly in the middle of a crossing and looked in Madeleine's face.

"The *beauty* of it," she repeated.

"By Jove! that's just what I was thinking. Madge, this world is going to be a better place than it ever could have been if this awful thing, and all that went before it, had never happened. It's going to be better for both of us."

At that moment the toot of a motor-horn warned them to get out of the way. They didn't hear it.

"It's going to be better for *everybody*," said Madeleine.

"It ain't going to be better for me," said a voice. "I say, miss, if your young man wants to pop the question, 'adn't you better step on to the side-walk? We don't want no more inquests."

The speaker was the driver of the car whose

progress they had arrested. Mechanically they took the hint, and the car passed on.

"Madge," said Danvers, "we're making fools of ourselves."

"All people do, at these times," said Madeleine; "but we are not such big fools as some of them. But I say, Dan, this will *keep*, won't it?"

"Till the end of all things."

"All right; then let's pass on to the next. I'm off to see your mother. I've something to tell her. I tried to save him."

"Beloved, you're a brick! But I go too."

"Of course. We go together. And sharp's the word! Only two hours to train time. Meet me on the platform."

And without another word she was gone.

For some minutes Danvers stood bewildered, and pinched himself to make sure he was not dreaming. Satisfied that he was wide awake, he resolved to go straight to Pindar's rooms and tell him everything.

"That's the most difficult of all," he said to himself. "I wonder how poor old Pin will take it? But it's best to tell him at once."

Pin took it splendidly. When, after a little beating about the bush, Danvers suddenly

announced that he was engaged to Madeleine, Pindar jumped to his feet, thundered his congratulations, and roared with delight. But if you had been in his rooms a few hours afterwards you would have noticed that the mouthpiece of his favourite pipe was bitten clean through. He had a powerful jaw. I have only to add concerning him that he, too, passed the Practical Examination with credit and did not turn monk.

When Danvers reached his rooms a letter lay on the table. It ran as follows:—

"EAGLE LODGING-HOUSE,
BECK'S ALLEY.

"MY DEAR SON,—I congratulate you on your First in Moral Science. Accept the blessing of the poor old drunkard who is all that is left of your father.

"You inherit your aptitude for speculative morals from me; you owe me that; and I confess I was a bit cut up when you refused to shake hands. It's a mere accident that I have fallen to the lowest depths. Had I been able to come round in the morning, I would have set you right on Free-will.

"But it's too late now. When you get this

letter all will be over with me. I shall leave it with the boss to post to-morrow morning.

"Your father's mind, Jack, is considerably dilapidated, but retains enough intelligence to see the way out. As to will-power, I am unfortunately dependent on the services of a friend, and I begged enough money outside the Senate House to purchase his help. He lives in a bottle. Be thankful you gave me nothing, but tell Madeleine and Pindar that their money was well bestowed.

"I knew Madeleine at once; but you I did not recognise till you gave your name. The last time I saw you your cheeks were smeared with strawberry jam.

"Thirty-two years ago, to the very day, the list came out on which my own name was conspicuous; and it is true, as I said, that I have walked twenty-eight miles to-day—to assist at your triumph, my boy, which I heard was expected, and to recall my own.

"I returned from the River Plate a month ago, having worked my passage in a cattle ship. Tell your mother, and the others whom I have wronged, that during these twelve years I have tasted every humiliation and endured all the torments of the damned. So far as I am concerned, the last act of expiation will be

made to-night—in the pool below St Barnabas' Weir. But go on with the work of atonement, my boy. *And ask Madeleine to help you.* It needs more than the efforts of one person to get a soul like mine out of purgatory. Besides, she will counteract the speculative morals, of whose effects I am afraid. Speculative morals, Jack, should not be taken neat—that was my mistake. They require mixing with other things. Mix them with Madeleine. Once more, I bless you both.

"JOHN DANVERS."

III

THE POOR MAN'S PIG[1]

THE people who say that modern ideas have not yet reached the agricultural labourer must be unacquainted with our parish, or rather with our Parliamentary Division.

Social unrest has certainly made its appearance in our midst. To be sure, we are as picturesque as we were a hundred years ago; our streams are unpolluted, our cottages are thatched, our beehives are made of straw, our front doors are flanked by tall hollyhocks and masses of marguerite. But our minds have changed. We are no longer content with nine shillings a week, though some of our employers think we ought to be. We learned to read and write in the days of the School Boards, despite the efforts of Farmer Taplin, who joined the Board for the express purpose of "putting a stopper on all this education." Farmer Taplin,

[1] Published originally in *Cornhill*.

however, may rest content; we have forgotten almost everything we learnt, and are dependent on Tom Mellon the waggoner, who never went to school at all, for reading out the jokes in *Comic Cuts*. We have also forgotten the old songs our fathers used to sing; but we know many others, learnt in the music-halls of the neighbouring town. We seldom go to church; certain of us have not been inside its walls for years. The reason is that we are sceptics; though, as a rule, we don't put it quite so bluntly as that. We say, "We don't 'old with these 'ere parsons." In politics most of us are Radicals, our employers being Tories to a man. And, what is more significant, a few of us are Socialists. As we pick up the sheaves behind the reaping machine we converse about these things and criticise the Social System, using phrases taught us by the emissaries of Reform. "The abolition of private property" comes quite easily to our once untutored lips. We point to the Massey-Harris reaper, which our employer's son (with a cigarette in his mouth) is driving, and say, "That there machine ought to belong to *us*"; only we put an adjective before "machine" which I cannot print.

We have been informed on high authority

that we are "wage-slaves"; but we know how to make things uncomfortable for our masters. We take it out of them in many ways. A young gentleman who came down from London to inspire our revolutionary ardour told us on the village green "that he would be very sorry for any labourer who was fool enough to be loyal to his master." He had no cause to be sorry for us—at least, not on that account. For doing a job with the minimum of efficiency you will go far before you can find the equals of some of us. Through our artfulness or stupidity we have hastened the bankruptcy of several farmers in the neighbourhood. Machines have been broken and crops have been left uncut; valuable mares have miscarried, sheep have become infected and fat cattle have died. We had a hand in most of it. Why should we exert ourselves to put profits into other people's pockets? That is what the young gentleman from London asked us. The only mistake he made was in supposing we had never thought of it before. Long before his arrival we had been discussing the point among ourselves. Indeed, when the young gentleman asked this question we felt our intelligence affronted, and one of us shouted, "Does your mother know

you're out?" and it was only when our instructor went on to explain how shirking our jobs was "doing our duty to the working class" that we became reconciled to his presence on our village green.

Of course, we are not all Socialists; at least, not yet. But our numbers have increased. At the last Parliamentary election, out of a total electorate of 12,000, the Socialist candidate polled 500 votes, which was just enough to give the Tory the seat. But jeer not. At the election before that, when the Liberal got in, we polled only 150, which means that our vote has increased by about 300 per cent. in five years.

We attribute the increase mainly to the exertions of the young gentleman aforesaid, whose van had been going the round of our villages in the interval. During this period there have been accessions to our ranks in every parish. So far as I know, there has only been one defection. It is the story of that defection which I have now to tell.

Our leader was Silas Doebedoe. The etymologists affirm that this name is a corruption of one of those Scriptural appellations of which the old Puritans were fond; from which I infer

that an ancestor of Silas must have been called "Do-as-thou-wouldst-be-done-by." Only in its most corrupted form was Silas worthy of his ancestral name. For sharp practice in everything within his range I have never met his match.

He was generally known as "Dobby." His employer called him a "farm-hand"; but this term understates his abilities. Prior to his arrival in our midst he had seen something of the world; had been a soldier—some said a deserter; had worked on the line as a shunter, and as a navvy in the towns. That a man with so varied an experience should have settled down to the life of a "farm-hand" was something of a mystery; but in these days, when labourers are scarce and farmers must put up with what they can get, such mysteries are not uncommon in the country districts. I believe that Silas had a history which he was not over-anxious to make public property; he used to put us off by saying that he had a weak lung and the doctor had ordered him to live on the land. Outwardly there was nothing to distinguish him from those whose lungs were in the best of health, and as it was natural to Silas to lie whenever anything was to be gained by so doing—in which respect, I am sorry

to say, he was not unlike the rest of our parishioners—there is no very strong reason for believing this part of his story.

It was Silas who prepared the ground for the advent of the young gentleman from London. Long before that stirring event he had taught us that we were slaves and accustomed us to look to "the State" for our salvation. What "the State" was we did not accurately know; but we were quite sure that it was on our side and against everybody else, and could do anything it liked. We understood that when "the State" got to work we should be at liberty to name our own wages; work for as long as we felt inclined—that is, not for very long; order our own cottages; select any piece of land which pleased us, and have beer at discretion. The State was just the sort of fellow to suit our fancy; for not only would it do us a good turn at every point, but would make things "damned hot" (to quote Dobby) for the people we disliked. The keynote of the Social Revolution—so we were informed by the same authority—would be "a workhouse full o' Dooks"; our employers would be put in prison and fed with the bread and water of affliction, while the Parson, who kept two motors, would be sent to mend the

roads in place of old Job Severance, who was married to his fourth wife and had twenty-seven children.

It is true that we were a little muddled at times, as, for example, when Dobby told us that the wages-system would be abolished. We used to shy at that, for we liked our wages and wanted more of them; but Dobby set the matter at rest by assuring us that what the State would abolish was not the wages, but only "the system." To that we had no objection. Whatever "system" might mean, it was nothing we cared about; so the sooner it was abolished the better. Sometimes, indeed, we grew sceptical, especially on Saturday nights, when, banging our pots down on the taproom table, we would ask one another, "I say, Bill, *what's* this 'ere 'State' that's goin' to do everything for everybody?" Whereupon Bill would answer, "The State—why, it's what give us Old Age Pensions." "Aye—and what vaccinates the kids," says Tom. "Aye—and what schools 'em too," says Sam. Here the landlord would chime in, "It's the same as what the parson was talking about on Sunday—Church and State, you know." "Get out," somebody would answer, "that's not the same State as vaccinates the kids."

"Yes, it is." "And a bloomin' shame too." "*What's* a shame?" "Why, this 'ere vaccination." "Shut up about vaccination—who wants to talk about that? We're talkin' about the State." "You're thinkin' about State-coaches." "You mean stage-coaches." "No, I don't." "You don't know what you're talkin' about." "You're a liar!" "Order, gentlemen, order," cries the landlord; and, order being restored, Dobby takes up his parable. "Now just you listen to me and I'll tell you what the State is. The State's what gives you fourpence for threepence." "That's it! That's it," cry the audience—and we all go home, more or less steadily, not doubting that the State is omnipotent. From which you may infer that great ideas get considerably diluted before they reach our parish; but they reach it all the same.

These great ideas, when introduced into the medium of our agricultural minds, often assume a form very different from that which their originators intend them to wear. The idea as freshly minted, say, by Karl Marx or Mr Bernard Shaw, is one thing; as apprehended by a farm labourer it is quite another. It suffers a sea change—or rather a land

change—in the process of transmission from the mountain-tops of thought to the lowly vales of manual toil.

Some of our instructors would be startled if they were to see their own doctrines as they are reflected in our minds. I remember, for example, how bothered we were by the conception of Universal Brotherhood. Many barrels of ale were consumed in our efforts to penetrate this mystery, and so hot did the discussion grow that serious fights were only prevented by the timely threats of the landlord to fetch the police. But we got it at last, thanks, as usual, to Dobby, who announced that he was going to put the matter "in a nutshell." "What is it," he said, "what is it that Tom Mellon and Charley Stamp allus does when they're three parts drunk? Tell me that." We all knew the answer to that question. Tom Mellon and Charley Stamp, when three parts drunk, always stripped off their coats and had a "set-to" in the village street. So we replied accordingly. "Well, then," said Dobby, "now we're gettin' to Universal Brotherhood. It means this: Tom Mellon and Charley Stamp, instead o' fighting one another when they're drunk, *will 'elp one another 'ome.*"

Every labourer in our parish is the owner of a pig. Not to possess a pig is to be without an anchorage, or point of support, in the universe. The pig is the centre of gravity of our existence. He steadies our minds, gives sanity to our aspirations, and keeps us in touch with realities. He is the ultimate standard of reference by which we test the teachings of science, philosophy, and religion. Whatsoever reformer or prophet would win our allegiance, let him see to it that his doctrines encounter no point of resistance in the pig.

We used in old days to kill our pig and consume his *disjecta membra* in the winter months. But we are business men in everything that concerns the sty; we work out our profit and loss to the fraction of a halfpenny; and we have discovered that it is far more profitable to sell our pig to the dealer, and buy what bacon we want in the village shop. "Pigs is pigs in these times." And I can tell you we are hard bargainers, as every pig-dealer on the countryside knows to his cost. In the art of buying under the market price and selling over it, we could give points to Rockefeller. To sell his pig for something more than its real value is a coveted dis-

tinction, and sheds a lustre on the man who does it which keeps us talking half the winter. To "be done" by a dealer, on the other hand, is a thing we dread far more than the pains of hell-fire, though it must be confessed that, in spite of our scepticism, the prospect of these is apt to make us nervous as we approach our latter end. Billy Grimes, for instance, confided to me on his death-bed "that he was sure the devil would get him"; but what cut him up more than all else was that his old missus, whom he was leaving behind, was "no 'and at sellin' a pig."

Imperial affairs do occasionally attract our attention; but they are a mere parenthesis in the deeper policy of the sty.

We heard the other day, for example, that there was going to be civil war in Ulster, and that the Empire was on the point of disruption. Tom Mellon had just read all about it from the *Daily Mail*, when suddenly there arrived a breathless messenger with the news that Dobby's pig had fetched the unprecedented price of twelve shillings a score[1] at the weekly cattle sale. Whereupon the Imperial Crisis vanished from our minds: so far as we were concerned the British Empire ceased to

[1] This was before the war.

exist, and a debate arose which for length, oratorical affluence, power to draw fine distinctions, and general inconclusiveness, would bear comparison with the highest efforts of the House of Commons on the Home Rule Bill. The dispute was as to whether we were justified in selling at eleven shillings a score instead of holding out for twelve. The highest authorities were cited, including the auctioneer; and the opinion of this great expert being in favour of the lower rate, we were on the point of concluding in that sense, when Silas Doebedoe arrived on the scene and completely upset the course of the argument. Contrary to our expectation, we found that the excellent bargain just made had brought no contentment to the soul of Dobby. "Twelve shillings a score!" he said contemptuously. "What's twelve shillings a score? You just wait till the State begins to buy yer pigs, and then you'll get any price you like to ask."

Dobby was far and away the best "pig-man" among the lot of us, which is saying a good deal. We used to say, "Dob has a knack wi' 'em." "Knack" is our word for "genius." "Dob's the boy for making 'em swell," was another way of expressing the

same thing. I have known him buy a measly pig, which the owner was going to knock on the head, for half-a-crown and nurse it by the application of "knack" till it half filled the sty and was worth ten pounds. He was always on the look-out for these derelicts, and never failed to rehabilitate them into marketable animals; and I can tell you there was some talk in our village when Dobby appeared one day at the auction of a small holding and made a bid at two hundred pounds.

He would spend long hours—literally hours, some of which, I fear, were due to his employer—leaning over the wall of his sty and gazing at the animal that wallowed below. These were the happiest hours of his life. What was he thinking about? Strictly speaking, I doubt if he was thinking at all. He was in that attitude of mind which M. Bergson recommends as the only proper attitude for the metaphysician: the condition, namely, when thought gives place to intuition and the mind becomes completely identified with its object. Had Dobby gazed at the universe with the same intensity and self-detachment he would have been a great mystic. Had he been a Japanese artist he would have

drawn us pigs so true to the life that we should have heard them grunt. But, as it was, the result of all these communings with porcine reality was merely to produce in Dobby that wonderful "knack" which "made 'em swell."

It is a notable fact, which I often observed, that during these mystic hours the pig used to gaze at Dobby almost as intently as Dobby gazed at the pig; they would grunt to each other at intervals; there was the same expression on both their faces, and I am strongly of opinion that the attitude of the animal to the man was as strictly Bergsonian as that of the man to the animal. Intuition was at work on both sides; action and reaction were equally powerful; the "knack" was reciprocal, and the pig is no more to be considered as the creation of Dobby than Dobby as the creation of the pig.

Now it so happened that Mr Archibald Hermes, M.A., of Oxford—the young gentleman "from London" who has done so much to promote the noble discontent of our Parliamentary Division—had never studied these things. He had the *Republic* of Plato at his fingerends; he was an expert in Political Economy;

he was master of the Philosophy of the State, and could discourse by the hour on the relations of the individual to the Social Whole. But he knew nothing about pigs. Needless to say, he had never kept a pig himself, and was naturally a stranger to the emotions, desires, aspirations, and the peculiar mental atmosphere which arise from that species of proprietorship. The relation of man and man in the social structure was a subject he had been studying for years, but to the relation of men and pigs he had never given a thought. He had not even reflected (as the sequel will show) that the animals, thanks to those procreative instincts which the Creator has implanted in their nature, have much to do with the existence of an "unearned increment" in the affairs of men.

Mr Hermes' strongest point was the land question; he knew the statistics of the subject by heart: he had made a catalogue of every abuse, injustice, and anomaly for which the private ownership of land can be made responsible, and could marshal them in his speeches with overwhelming effect; he was prepared to answer any question about the land at a moment's notice, and the most hostile audience could not heckle him out of

countenance. For these reasons he had been selected by the Organisation which ran him as the right man for propaganda among the agricultural labourers.

None the less, I think it was a mistake to send him down to our parish without a word of warning. For here, as I have said, the pig and not the land is the ultimate category of our thought; we cannot think of Utopia or Heaven without a smell of frying bacon in our nostrils, nor listen contentedly to any Gospel which is incompatible with pork-pie. It is true that some of us are Socialists already; but our minds move slowly, and we take a long time in bringing new ideas to the ultimate point of reference. At the time of which I am writing we were ripe for that reference; we were just beginning to make it, as was shown by the applause we gave to Dobby when he declared that the State would buy the pigs—not the land—at our own price. Had the Society sent down a propagandist who was a good pig-man as well as an accomplished social philosopher he could have converted the whole parish at a stroke.

It was the eve of a by-election, and we were all gathered on the village green. In

the midst stood the van which contained Mr Hermes' bed, cooking stove, and munitions of war. The sides of the van were covered with various texts inviting the rural mind to rise against oppression, which we read, or had read to us, with much satisfaction while we were waiting for Mr Hermes. He meanwhile was smoking a cigarette inside the van and just finishing the last act of a play by Mr Shaw—for Mr Hermes is so ready with appropriate eloquence that he does not require even a moment's preparation before addressing the meeting.

At last the orator came forth, accompanied by the chairman, a young minister from the next town. Standing on a platform at the end of the van, he uttered these words in a loud, ringing voice:

"How long are you men going to let yourselves be treated as slaves? Does any man here think he's not a slave? Then in five minutes I'll prove to him that he is."

This promise Mr Hermes fulfilled in even less time than he had indicated. "What is a slave?" he asked. "A slave is a man whom his master uses as a chattel." ("Did he say a 'chapel'?" whispered Tom Mellon.) "Is there a labourer in this parish whom his master

doesn't use as a chattel?" ("No!") "Then what were we? Why, slaves of course."

The main principle thus established, Mr Hermes proceeded for the space of forty minutes to follow it into the details of its application. Then, drawing the threads of his argument together, he showed us that one remedy, and one remedy only, could be found for our woes—the abolition of private property and the State-ownership of all the means of production, especially the land. This led up to the peroration; and here it was that Mr Hermes fell by chance upon a metaphor which, as ill luck would have it, revealed the weak spot in his armour. Until private property was abolished, so he assured us, we agricultural labourers would be doomed to live like "pigs in a sty." This was the last sentence.

Now, the idea of living like a pig in a sty is not so disgusting to the mind of our parish as it would be to the mind of a town-bred, pig-despising audience. With us the pig is honoured, and his sty has a sanctity of its own. Sometimes, as in the case of Silas Doebedoe, the sty is almost a substitute for a shrine or a church. Hence it was that Mr Hermes' concluding sentence was something

worse than a weak ending. It implied disparagement of the pig. It was disrespectful to the local deity. It jarred with emotions which lie in the deeps of our agricultural breasts, and came perilously near a personal insult. Had Mr Archibald Hermes possessed a finer skill in his calling of paid agitator he would have known how to make our pig-emotions serve his purpose and would have turned them into productive capital. He would have shown us that the present Social System was inimical to the true interest of pigs and unjust to the lover of bacon. He could have done it quite easily. But instead of this he spoke of our idol with a note of scorn, and roused the whole current of our pig-consciousness into opposition. He prodded into us, as it were, at the most sensitive point of our epidermis; and in an instant we became as angry and foul-mouthed as we are wont to be when a calf on Sunday morning upsets the feeding-pail over our best trousers, or when one of Farmer Perryman's big rams suddenly butts into us from the rear. Up to that moment our blood had been boiling against the Social System. Now, for some reason we could not quite explain to ourselves, it suddenly cooled towards the Social System and began

to boil at Mr Hermes; and Dobby, who was standing next to me, said in a contemptuous whisper:

"What does *'e* know about pigs?"

Mr Hermes then declared that he was ready to answer questions, and the words were hardly out of his mouth when somebody on the outskirts of the crowd called out in truculent tones:

"*What about the poor man's pig?*"

Mr Hermes was not prepared for this question. He had thought a great deal about "capital," but not in the form of the poor man's pig. The word "capital" suggested to his mind a big factory, a railway company, or a line of steamships; it had never suggested a fat sow. So he was visibly disconcerted, perhaps as much by the fierce tone of the question as by the question itself, and he blurted out an answer which I am bound to say was unworthy of an Oxford man.

"The poor man's pig?" he said. "Well, what about it?"

"Tell us what Socialism is going to do wi' un," replied the voice.

Mr Hermes did not know what to say. But he had to say something, and to make it as consistent as possible with what he had said already. So after a moment's thought, which

might have been better bestowed, the oracle replied as follows:

"The State will buy the poor man's pig at a fair price."

"How much *a score?*" we all shouted at once. It must be remembered that we had just made up our minds to take not less than eleven shillings at the local sale.

"A score *of what?*" said Mr Hermes with a bewildered look on his intellectual brow.

A roar of laughter greeted this reply, and we observed that an agitated conference was proceeding between Mr Hermes and the chairman. Presently the former again faced the audience and said:

"The State will pay so much for each individual pig. It will not buy them *a score at a time.*"

At this reply our laughter became a tornado and we fairly lost control of ourselves. For five full minutes we roared and hallooed, poking one another in the ribs, thumping one another on the back, and saying to our chosen friends as we gasped for breath, "Eh, Tommy, that beats all; that licks me 'oller; that's the best 'un as I've 'eard for many a long year. I'd give eighteenpence to 'ear another as good as that."

Meanwhile the conference had been resumed between Hermes and the chairman: to judge by the gestures of the two men it had become an altercation. Even we began to perceive that two different brands of Socialism were represented on the platform. At last, the din having subsided, Hermes, making a great effort to be calm, resumed:

"The chairman reminds me, gentlemen, that the point we are discussing has not yet been settled by the leaders of the movement. Of course, under Socialism, we must be prepared for a certain amount of give and take. Pigs are unquestionably a form of private property, and the owner of a pig is a capitalist. It may be—though, as I say, the point is not yet decided—that the State will take the pigs over and rear them for the good of the community. But the owner of the pig will get back far more than its value in the general advantage of his position."

At this the chairman said "Hear, hear" in a loud voice, but the rest of us roared out "Rot!"—and other things. Slow as we are, we were quick enough to perceive that the orator's second answer was inconsistent with the first, which gave us the comfortable feeling that we had him in a hole.

There is a dormant capitalist in the breast of every man. Mr Archibald Hermes, whose knowledge of human nature lagged behind his other attainments, was not aware of this. A few minutes earlier he had had us in the hollow of his hand, helpless in the grip of his superior knowledge, overpowered by the affluence of his speech, and prepared to strike a telling blow for the social revolution by voting next day for the Socialist candidate. In an instant he found the whole situation reversed. Instead of hissing the social system, we were hissing Mr Hermes. Instead of our being in his power, he was in ours. We had him down; our heels were on his neck, and we were exulting in his humiliation.

He was conscious that he had now become the bottom dog, but what had placed him in that position he hadn't the ghost of an idea. Nor had the chairman, who, in his efforts to retrieve the day, had been giving Mr Hermes the worst possible advice. The two were quarrelling in consequence, Mr Hermes having twice told the Chair in our hearing to "shut up." The heat thence arising effectually prevented both of them from perceiving the root of the mischief—which was, of course, that they had roused the dormant capitalist in the

breast of the agricultural labourer by reminding him of his pig. Now the capitalist is an ugly customer in whatever form you encounter him, but never uglier than when he takes this shape. So matters went on from bad to worse, and a sinister cry of "Put him in the pond!" had already broken out when the chairman saw fit to intervene.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I appeal to you to give the speaker a fair hearing. Our friend over yonder has raised a very difficult question, and perhaps I may be allowed to add a short explanation to what Mr Hermes has said. The State will not interfere with the property of the poor, but only with the property of the rich. The poor man will be left in full possession of his pig. State piggeries will be established, as Mr Hermes has told you, and every poor man will be allowed to claim a free pig as his birthright. When the pig is ready for market the State will buy it back at a price to be fixed by law; that is, unless the poor man prefers to consume it in his own family. The difference will be that all buying and selling between individuals will be done away with. The State will be the only purchaser. Then you will be sure of a fair price for your pig and escape from

the clutches of the dealers, who invariably cheat you."

He would have said more, but the last four words were fatal. Had the chairman set himself to devise the deadliest insult to our parish, he could have hit upon nothing better suited to his purpose than those four words. Cheated by pig-dealers! At the bare notion the soul of Dobby flamed into wrath and the whole crowd caught fire. There was a long, fierce howl of indignation, followed by an instant of terrible silence, in which we gazed into one another's faces as though seeking an execration strong enough to meet the case.

That instant was the salvation of the platform. A single word suddenly arrested the rising storm. It was the word "litters." At first "litters" was all we could hear; but presently we became aware that the same voice which had raised the original difficulty was asking a question. And the question was:

"*What about the litters?*"

There is a spell in the word "litters" to which the mind of the agricultural labourer is singularly susceptible. It reminds us of great mysteries and exciting moments. It puts us on ground which is our own, ground

where we can walk with the assurance of arch-druids and the dignity of high priests. With one voice we took up the question of the speaker, and in tones befitting a solemn incantation we repeated his words:

"What about the litters?"

Then we waited for a reply.

For a moment the countenance of Mr Hermes grew brighter. He saw, or thought he saw, an opening that promised escape.

"I am glad my friend has raised that question," he said. "The litters are a striking illustration of what I have been explaining in the course of my speech. They represent unearned increment. Under Socialism they will be taxed to their full value. That is to say, the poor man will either surrender the litter to the State as soon as it is born" (here the chairman vainly tugged at Mr Hermes' coat tails), "or he will pay a tax equal to the value of the pigs, less a small allowance for the expenses of—of the sow's confinement. A moment's consideration will show you the justice of this arrangement. It is true you will lose your own litter; but then you will get back in other forms a share in all the litters which the State has taken from other people."

Again there was silence. It was compli-

cated and we were trying to think it out. We were to give up our litters and get back a share from the litters of other people. *What* share? Would it be living or dead? Would it come back in pigs or in pork, or in both, or in something else? If pork, would it be fat or lean? Should we be allowed to choose? If pigs, would the same thing happen over again when the next litter arrived? Not more than ten seconds was required for all these questions, and several others of the same kind, to pass through our minds. We could answer none of them.

You see, our minds are not constructed on the same pattern as the minds of young gentlemen from Oxford. The young gentlemen grasp the principle first and leave the details to be settled afterwards. We begin with the details, and work up, through them, to the principles. It is therefore futile for the young gentlemen to assure us that "we shall get a share" unless they can also tell us whether the share is to be in living pig or dead pork—or something else. We want to know that from the very outset. Things which make no difference to the young gentlemen make a great difference to us. For example, a Socialism which rewarded our services in terms of

bacon would leave many of us cold or hostile; but a Socialism which sent round a small pig to every deserving labourer, especially if the Government would guarantee that the pig should have a curly tail—a feature to which our parish attaches great importance,—would win our votes to a man.

Ten seconds only, I say, were occupied in these cogitations, and then came this very question, voiced as it happened by a young fellow who was assistant teacher in the village school and was known to have leanings to vegetarianism:

"Will the share be living or dead?"

A whisper from the chairman informed Mr Hermes of the point of the questioner. Mr Hermes grasped it immediately.

"You must understand," he said, "that I am now dealing with the beginnings of the new system—with the time when the change to Socialism is taking place. It is only at the beginning that the State will appropriate the litters. Later on private ownership of pigs will be done away with" (here the chairman shook his head); "consequently there will be no litters for the State to appropriate. When Socialism is fully established there will be State piggeries and State bacon factories,

where enough bacon will be cured for everybody to have as much as he wants."

We were staggered by this announcement. We were to have our share, not in live pig, but in dead bacon. Never! The whole world might go to rack and ruin before we would submit to such an arrangement so sacrilegious. Our anger could no longer be restrained. Nobody heeded the young school teacher, who kept calling out amid the tumult of howls and curses, "What will the State do with the pigs when everybody has turned vegetarian?" There was a scene of indescribable confusion. Stones began to rain on the van and a dozen stout fellows were trying to overturn it. Silas Doebedoe and Mr Hermes, who had now dropped from the platform, were shaking their fists in one another's faces. A fierce argument had broken out between the vegetarian and the chairman, who were shrieking out something about a "free potato-patch." In a few moments somebody would have been seriously hurt.

Then suddenly the State itself appeared among us like a bolt from the blue. Behold, the village sergeant followed by his constable! Parting the throng as with a wedge, the sergeant made his way to the van. Arrived

there he lifted his cane on high, struck it on the side of the van and said to Mr Hermes, "Pack up!" That said, he turned to the crowd, now silent, and issued this command: "Go home, every man jack of yer!"

Both commands were instantly obeyed. I have only to add that next day we all rode in the costly motors of the local gentry to the polling-booth, where, to a man, we voted for the Tory candidate. We had received instructions to that effect from Dobby. And from that day our parish has looked upon Socialism as "a dodge" of which the sinister object is "to do the poor man out of his pig."

IV

THE CHEST OF CEDAR[1]

I

In the central district of a large manufacturing town in the north of England stand two churches, on opposite sides of the street.

One of these churches, that on the south side, has a Palladian front and a gloomy portal. The smoke of the city has deeply engrained itself in the walls, and penetrated to the remotest recesses of the interior. The windows are few and dirty, the light is bad, and the interior, which is vast, smells like a sepulchre. A board on the outside informs those who can read the smoke-blackened letters that the minister is the Reverend Julius Sahara, D.D., and that divine service is held on Sundays at 11 A.M. and 6.30 P.M. Also that marriages are "solemnised." The word

[1] Published originally in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

fits the place. If you wish to begin your wedded life in the depths of gloom, you should have the marriage "solemnised" in Dr Sahara's church.

The church on the north side is the opposite in more senses than one. It is aggressively modern and ostentatiously artistic. Its architecture betrays no recognisable tradition, and is not even ecclesiastical. You might take it for a large and handsome private house were it not for the notice-board outside. In substance the information on this board is similar to that on its opposite neighbour, except that it bears, or bore not long ago, the name of another pastor—the Reverend Gabriel Saccarin, also D.D. The lettering is of brilliant gold and glitters in the morning sun. And near by is another board or tablet on which is inscribed a long list of the mighty dead, all of whom, says the legend below, threw in their lot with the enlightened denomination whose members worship within. It was perhaps a fortunate circumstance for Dr Saccarin and his flock that the great men claimed by the board were beyond the reach of cross-examination.

The contrast in the outward appearance of these two churches was reproduced, at the

time this history begins, in the doctrines preached within their walls. I forget at the moment the names of the sects severally represented by the two churches; but I remember that they were known locally as the Saharists and the Saccarists. And I regret to add that the two pastors, who were not on good terms, had worse names for each other. Saccarin called his rival a "Moribundist," which Sahara countered by calling Saccarin an "Ad Captandumist." Politeness apart, it must be confessed that these latter names were not altogether inappropriate. Sahara stood in the tradition of Calvin and had a horror of modern thought. Saccarin, on the other hand, knew of no "thought" except the modern variety, and did not recognise any "thought" as valid which was more than seven years old.

The contrast was further emphasised by the difference in the personalities of the two men. Sahara was old and rigid; Saccarin was young and pliant. Sahara was forbidding; Saccarin had a passion for shaking hands. You never dared to shake hands with Sahara; but when you met Saccarin you seemed to be shaking hands all the time. Yes, even in his sermons the handshaking still went on. They

caused you, so to speak, to shake hands all round. They put you on good terms with the universe, with your fellow-men, with the preacher, and, above all, with yourself. Saccarin's voice was like that of a lark singing above the battlefield. He took a cheerful view of everything, saw "progress" everywhere, and took it for granted that each departing soul went immediately to heaven. Not so with the sermons of Sahara. In a voice befitting the Day of Judgment he thundered out the terrors of the Lord, loaded the righteous with filthy rags, lashed the guilty conscience, and pursued the wicked with tempests and flaming swords into the nethermost horrors of the pit. At a wedding he never failed to make mention of the wrath of God, and would enlarge upon the snares of Satan with appalling faithfulness. At a funeral he would dwell upon corruption and the worm, and I well remember one occasion when Sahara, turning to the group of sorrowful relatives gathered round the grave, plainly told them that the departed soul was reprobate and irrevocably damned.

Sahara's church was well-nigh empty; Saccarin's was full; and the filling of this had resulted, in large measure, from the emptying

of that. It was as if two great tanks had been placed side by side and the water of the one drawn off into the other by means of a subterranean pipe. Sahara's income had gradually diminished until he had become as poor as the church-mice who formed the bulk of his congregation. Saccarin was rich; he had an income which would have been acceptable to a Cabinet Minister. Sahara lived in lodgings at thirty shillings a week, board included. Saccarin was building a huge house on a hill-top. Sahara wrote his sermons on the back of letters or money-lenders' circulars, and kept them in a tub. Saccarin wrote his with an expensive typewriter and kept them in a Chest of Cedar, which he had purchased for ninety pounds.

It was a noble Chest, the work of cunning craftsmen in the olden time. It stood upon the feet of lions; a coat of arms was displayed on the lid; a bishop's mitre was carved at either end, and a group representing Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac covered the front. "The word of God must be worthily housed." A chest to house his sermons; a great mansion to house the chest; and a covering principle for both propositions. Saccarin's conscience was at ease.

II

Dr Saccarin was "a live man." No fine-spun theories, no obsolete theological dogmas, no antiquated notions of any kind about him. All was up-to-date. His sermons were "right there." They hit modern life, and the latest phase of modern life, in the very bull's-eye. They were discussed on the Exchange and at the political clubs; they were reported verbatim in Monday's paper on the next page to the "Market Intelligence"; and it is authentically related that a great surgeon, in the midst of a capital operation on the brain, paused at a critical moment to remark to his colleague, "I say, Biggar, you ought to come and hear Saccarin. His sermon last Sunday on the Progress of Surgery was the finest utterance I ever heard."

Dr Saccarin's philosophy, which had a fine note of modernity, may be summarised as follows.

The end for which the world is created is not happiness (an obsolete conception) but —education. The universe is best understood by thinking of it as a *university*. The human race is a vast mutual improvement society; the nations of the world are affiliated academies

in the Cosmic School; and God is the Supreme Author of the educational code and sole Minister of Instruction—a schoolmaster and not a taskmaster. All events, all objects, all laws, whether of nature or morality, have an educational reference; they are "lessons" in disguise; to find their "lesson" is to find their reason and their final cause.

Saccarin had discovered a new variety of the philosopher's stone, by means of which he could, at a moment's notice, transmute any object in the world or any event in daily life into the pure gold of an edifying "lesson." His discernment of the educational significance of things had the quality of genius. An item of news would furnish him with a theme, a change in the weather would give him a text. If, at ten o'clock on Saturday night, the boys in the street were calling a "late special" of the evening paper, Saccarin would rush out, buy the sheet, turn up the special news—a revolution in Turkey, a prize-fight in Nebraska, —and next morning the "lesson" of that event would be served up piping hot to a packed congregation of the most impressionable heads in the city. There was scarcely a great poem in the language, a picture in the

National Gallery, or a statue in the public park, which the genius of this preacher had not forced to yield a contribution to the educational designs of the universe. Artists would occasionally write to him suggesting their works as appropriate topics of discourse. A young poet in the congregation produced a volume of verse, bearing evident signs of an expectation (which was not disappointed) that Saccarin would preach on the poems. The poems were atrocious but the sermons were admirable. The whole scheme of things, as Saccarin saw it, was acting on the principle of that poet.

The "lessons" were all of the same type. The assassination of the Czar, rightly interpreted, was a proof of the Moral Order; the victory of the local champion illustrated the friendliness of nature. Whatever your first impressions of these things may have been, Saccarin's sermons would bring you round in a trice to a proper frame of mind. Had the malignancy of all the evils in the world been suddenly increased a thousandfold, it would have made no difference. Had the planet exploded under his nose and the whole human race been blown sky-high, leaving him and his congregation intact on some fragment of the

débris, it would have been a mere opportunity for the exercise of Saccarin's genius, and next morning would have found him explaining to the crowded pews that it was all right. Unless a planet occasionally exploded, he would have asked, how would the other planets ever learn to behave themselves properly? His principles were so elastic that they could be stretched to cover anything; and their elasticity was their strength. Crimes and calamities, plotted treacheries and disastrous mistakes—all were for edification. For this the bird sings, the sunset glows, the butterfly spreads her wings, the gale makes music in the trees; for this the captive moans, the lover sighs, and the murderer whets his knife; for this men perish in the coal-mine, sink in the shipwreck, rot in the slums.

For twenty years Saccarin had been engaged in this occupation, and during that time he had extracted from the universe over seventeen hundred lessons, all new and all up-to-date. I cannot say that the whole seventeen hundred were in perfect harmony with one another. There were discrepancies. But inasmuch as nobody, not even Saccarin himself, remembered more than a small fraction of the total, the discrepancies were not observed and can hardly

be counted as a drawback. The congregation was held together, not by the memory of the lessons already given, but by the expectation of the lessons yet to come. They would have been content to continue for ever on that basis, supported by the comfortable faith that all these "lessons," if thrown into the pot and boiled together, would yield some sort of nutritive broth for the soul.

But, though forgotten, the lessons were not lost. They were carefully preserved in the great Chest of Cedar. By virtue of its contents this Chest had acquired in Saccarin's eyes the character of a sacred object. It was his Ark of God, and the scent of the precious wood pervading his study, and steeping his manuscripts, was like the odour of incense to a devotee. Within the six sides of that fragrant tabernaculum lay the Meaning of Things. The Concentrated Extract of the Universe was there. There, unveiled by Saccarin, were the educative purposes of the whole world, and the moral lesson of every important event that had happened in twenty years, arranged under heads, expressed in irreproachable English, and plainly stamped in imperishable ink by the most expensive typewriter on the market.

III

On a certain Sunday evening when Saccarin, tired with a hard day's work, was reposing in his big study chair, he suddenly thought that the fragrance of the cedar had lost its freshness, while another and less pleasant odour seemed to be arising from the neighbourhood of the Chest. He had preached two sermons that day: the first on the riots in Chicago, the second on a Norwegian waterfall. In both of them he had surpassed himself in eloquence. But the effort had left him exhausted and depressed, and he was in the act of asking himself whether a man who has drawn seventeen hundred lessons from the universe may not justly claim a long holiday, when the change in the odour of the Chest arrested his attention and diverted his thoughts.

He crossed the room, opened the Chest, buried his head in the interior; and for some moments his wife, who was seated by the fire, heard him sniffing loudly.

"My dear," he said at length, "I am convinced that a fermentation of gases is going on among the contents of this chest. I believe there is something wrong with the ink of my typewriter. I noticed it gave out a peculiar

odour yesterday when I was composing my notes on the Norwegian waterfall. I must send the ink to be analysed."

Resuming his seat he relapsed into silence. After a time he continued—

"My dear, I'm not easy in my mind. I don't like the odour of the chest. And I'm anxious about myself. I feel that I am coming to the end of my tether. There's a great dearth of edifying matter in the world just now. I believe we are on the eve of a moral famine. I've often thought it might come—a time when the universe shuts off the supply of all the indications which might reveal its educational purpose. If that happens, we shall go to the workhouse."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs Saccarin, "you're only tired. There's sure to be something good in to-morrow's paper. And even if there isn't, what does it matter? Preach your old sermons over again."

"They wouldn't be up-to-date," said Saccarin.

"Touch them up a bit, or change the texts."

"H'm—I don't know. Not so easy as you think. And what if fermentation has really begun in the chest? I believe it has. I heard a distinct sound of fizzing when I opened the lid a moment ago. It's just possible that

to-morrow morning we shall find the whole seventeen hundred manuscripts reduced to a mass of pulp."

"Rubbish!" cried Mrs Saccarin. "You need a holiday. We've plenty of money. Why not take a trip to the United States? You'd enjoy it. And you'd get a new stock of lessons. I'm told there's no place like America for providing a live preacher with subjects."

"Yes, America's a great country," said Saccarin, as he rose to go to bed. "I think I'll take the trip. But meanwhile I feel as though something horrible was going to happen. I tell you, I don't like the odour of the chest. It doesn't smell right."

Saccarin's dreams that night were nothing less than awful. He thought he stood beside the Chest and heard the sound of a diabolical fermentation going on within. The interior was boiling like a cauldron and froth was issuing from the joints and from underneath the lid. The froth formed itself into great balls, which grew and grew, and filled the house, and poured from the chimneys, and spread into space, until they covered the church and overwhelmed the new mansion on the hill. Finally a huge globe of froth

descended just where Saccarin stood and suffocated him. He awoke in agony, to find his head under the bedclothes.

He rose early, and his first act was to examine the Chest. It was all right. He sniffed it all round; the cedar had recovered its fragrance. He stopped the clock on the mantelpiece that he might listen more attentively. The fizzing had subsided. There was no sign of fermentation within.

A moment later Mrs Saccarin, excited and radiant, rushed into the room with the morning paper in her hand.

"Great news!" she cried; "*Button's Bank has failed!*"

"Glorious!" answered Saccarin, as he snatched the paper from his wife's hands. "Too good to be true! I've been longing for a great bank failure for years. It's the finest subject a man can have—teeming with lessons. Yes, here it is! 'Failure of Button's Bank. Widespread financial ruin.' Why, it gives me a new lease of life! We shall have to enlarge the church again."

"But suppose our leading people are involved in the ruin of the Bank?" said his wife.

"Pooh!" answered the Doctor, "that will make no difference to us. Or if it does, it

will be a difference on the right side. You wait and see! When the ruined people have heard my sermon next Sunday they'll double their subscriptions. I'll make them! See if I don't."

The good news of the morning was not yet exhausted. Among the letters on the breakfast table was one with an American stamp. Saccarin, whose mind was preoccupied with elation over the bank failure, had read the others without paying much attention to their contents. But when he came to this one he uttered a cry of joy.

It was an invitation to the pastorate of a Fifth Avenue church in New York.

IV

Next Sunday Saccarin preached, morning and evening, on the failure of Button's Bank. An hour before the morning service the church was thronged to the doors. A special force of police was in attendance to manage the crowd at the gates. Hundreds were unable to obtain admittance. Arrangements were rapidly made for holding the evening service in the City Drill Hall, which had an auditorium for four thousand persons.

The evening sermon was the masterpiece. With an eloquence which, people said, recalled his great discourses on the Messina earthquake and the loss of the *Titanic*, Saccarin showed that the failure of Button's Bank was a signal triumph in the march of eternal Justice. It was a necessary incident in the progress of the world to the commercial millennium. Without the lessons learned from such catastrophes mankind would be unable to find its way to the promised land. A certain number of them was imperatively required by the moral order. No bank failures — no millennium. Such were the terms of the moral order. They were cheap terms. They were reasonable terms. Will you accept them? Or do you reject them? Then you reject the millennium.

The majority of the audience showed by their manner, and by their singing of the last hymn, that they were prepared to accept the terms. Saccarin had conquered. And the Chest of Cedar would duly receive the record of his victory.

One man, however, remained unconverted.

He was a grim Highlander named McTavish, who had lost all his money by the failure of Button's Bank. This man belonged to the

remnant of Dr Sahara's once flourishing Calvinistic flock; but hearing a rumour that the catastrophe would be treated by Saccarin from a metaphysical point of view, he had listened to the advice of a friend and allowed himself for once to join the crowd of "misguided bodies" assembled in the City Drill Hall.

He listened to the sermon without stirring a muscle and without moving his eyes from the preacher's face—a stern figure of stone, carved out of the Grampian rock. A close observer, however, might have noticed a gradual darkening in the deep shadows on his face, a tenser line in the firm mouth, and a growing light of battle in the sunken eyes. When the congregation rose to sing the last hymn McTavish remained seated in the same motionless attitude.

As Saccarin, full of the triumph of the sermon, was walking home, somebody touched him on the shoulder. It was McTavish.

"I've been thinking you've given us a grand argument this night, Dr Saccarin," said he.

"Thank you, Mr McTavish," said Saccarin.

"But it hasna convinced *me*," said McTavish.

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that."

"Ye see, I've been asking myself a question.

Man, I've lost a sicht of money. And an auld friend of mine has lost his."

"You have my heartfelt sympathy, Mr McTavish. But who is the old friend?"

"It's Dr Sahara. Three hundred pounds o' hard-saved money. A wee bit for the puir body's auld age."

"Very sad; very sad, indeed, Mr McTavish; but we must bow before the wisdom of the general laws of the universe."

"It's no bowing you'll get from *me* this night, Dr Saccarin. I'm thinking that Button had a very respectable bank."

"Yes; but honourable men must suffer at times."

"And I'm thinking, Dr Saccarin, there are ither banks that are no respectable. There's Hook's."

"I don't quite follow you, Mr McTavish."

"And I'm thinking that if Providence was as wise as ye mak oot, Hook's Bank would ha' failed instead o' Button's."

"The ways of Providence are inscrutable, Mr McTavish."

"Ye'll no escape on that, Dr Saccarin. Ye've been doing your best this night to show us that the ways of Providence are no inscrutable at all. Didna ye tell us what Providence

meant by closing the door of Button's Bank? Man, ye're contradicting yourself."

Dr Saccarin was silent. Mc'Tavish went on.

"Ye see, I'm asking a question: *Why Button and not Hook?*"

"I can't answer that, Mr Mc'Tavish."

"Then ye are a man of a small intelligence. It's the only question before us this night."

No answer.

"I'm thinking, Dr Saccarin, that Hook would ha' filled the bill better than Button. Ye may tak your general laws of the universe to hell with ye, along with the rest of your bad doctrine. Ye'll no convince me that a philosophic God maks general laws and leaves the Deil to bring them down on the wrong man. Canna ye see that Button's the wrong man? Canna ye see that it ought to be Hook? I'm very much disappointed in ye, Dr Saccarin. Ye're no the preacher that Sahara is. And I'll wish ye a good night."

V

Saccarin pursued his homeward way, much preoccupied. He had chosen a circuitous route among the byways, wishing to avoid the crowd in the main street and the frequent encounters

with people he knew. McTavish's question haunted him. "Why Button rather than Hook?" He could not answer. Presently the question transmuted itself into another form, "*Why Saccarin rather than Sahara?*" and it seemed to him that a mocking voice was bidding him take *that* question for his subject next Sunday. "Your own success and Sahara's failure; your own affluence and Sahara's poverty," the voice was saying; "take that for your subject and draw the lesson." And again the feeling came over him that he was at the end of his tether. Then he remembered the invitation from New York. And swiftly he resolved to accept it and begin afresh on another line.

Had Saccarin followed his usual route by the main street his preoccupation would have been sooner interrupted. He would have seen the crowd streaming in one direction—that of the hillside on which his new residence, just completed, stood out against the skyline. Many were running at the top of their speed, or racing on bicycles, and the air was full of shouts. Then a great bell began to ring, and a fire-engine, driven furiously, dashed through the crowd.

Saccarin heard the bell in the by-street, and,

turning quickly into the main thoroughfare, looked ahead. The sky in front of him was crimson, and great masses of flame were leaping round the summit of the hill.

A motor stopped at the curb by his side. "Quick, Doctor!" cried a voice. "The suffragettes have fired your new house. Jump in."

One thought only filled Saccarin's mind. A portion of his goods had been moved into the house in the previous week. Among them was the Chest of Cedar.

In a few moments he was on the spot. Leaping from the car he dashed among the firemen and cried in a voice of frenzy, "The cedar chest! the cedar chest! A hundred pounds to any man who will make his way into the study and bring out my cedar chest!"

"We've saved it already," said one of the men. "You'll find it on the top of yonder bank, beyond the reach of the flames."

"Thank God!" cried Saccarin. "The rest doesn't matter. Let it burn."

A moment later you might have seen an interesting sight. On the top of a high bank overlooking the conflagration, brilliantly lit up by the glare of the flames, was the figure of a man seated alone on a great oblong box. His hat was off, and the high brow of

Dr Saccarin gleamed in the light of the blazing house.

The firemen's efforts were hopeless from the first. An engaging young creature of nineteen, named Audrey, not approving of certain "lessons" drawn by Saccarin from the Woman's Movement, had purchased two-pennyworth of paraffin and tow, and, sneaking into the house when everybody was at church, had set it afire beyond remedy; thereby providing another lesson for future Saccarins to ponder.

Saccarin, seated on the Chest of Cedar, from which the heat of the fire was drawing a new fragrance, and feeling beneath him the concentrated essence of the meaning of things, was already meditating that lesson. He had fully risen to the occasion. "Next Sunday," he said to himself, "I will preach a sermon that will shake the city."

Suddenly he was aware of a tall figure standing by his side.

"That's a grand box ye're sitting on," said the voice of McTavish. "Maybe ye'll tak no offence if I sit beside ye."

And McTavish took his place beside the clergyman; and they two sat thus on the Chest.

Saccarin said nothing, and there was a long silence. The Highlander was the first to speak.

"I'm thinking there's great wealth in the box," said he.

"There is," answered Saccarin.

"Ye did well to save it. Banknotes, without a doot, and good securities—bonds and deeds and siclike."

"No. Wealth of a higher kind. Mr McTavish, this chest contains seventeen hundred original discoveries of the meaning of things."

"Ech, man, I'm sorry. It's no worth the saving. Dr Saccarin, your box is full o' trash; and yon lassies that set fire to guid property are the products of your ain bad doctrine. Man, ye'll do well to cast it among the burnings."

"Never!"

"Maybe there's an answer inside the box to the question I've been putting to ye. I'd be glad to see it if there is; I'm thinking we'd better open the box." And then McTavish, as though speaking to himself, repeated the ominous words, "*Why Button and not Hook?*"

I know not what strange influences were at work. But certain it is that the moment these

words were pronounced Saccarin heard something go snap inside his skull and the glare of light outside him seemed to transfer itself to his soul and become an inward illumination. He sprang from his seat and grasped the Highlander's bony hand.

"Mr McTavish," he cried, "I'm going to New York."

"It's a grand salary ye'll be getting in New York, Dr Saccarin; and I'm thinking ye'll no want your box any more," said McTavish. "Man, ye'll be well advised to burn this trash before ye go to New York. It's a mass of unco bad doctrine we're sitting on."

"We'll burn it, McTavish; we'll burn it! Help me to carry the chest to the edge of the bank," was Saccarin's reply.

At the foot of the bank and reaching level with its top was a great pile of boards which had been thrown out during the construction of the house. A piece of burning timber had fallen near and smoke was already rising from the heap.

"It's gey heavy," said McTavish, as the two men, at opposite ends, took hold of the rings of the Chest, "but maybe we two can raise it on to the altar of wood."

"Wait a moment," said Saccarin as he

dropped his end, "my cheque-book is inside. I keep it with the manuscripts of my sermons."

"It's worth better company," said McTavish. "We'll no burn the cheque-book."

Saccarin searched in his pocket, found a key, opened the Chest, rescued the cheque-book, and closed the lid.

"Now to the flames!" he cried. "McTavish, it's a sacrifice to the Lord of Hosts."

"The smoke will be like the smoke of Sodom and Gomorrah," said the slow, deep voice of the Gael.

The two men, staggering with the burden, deposited the Chest of Cedar on the top of the smouldering pile.

Then they sat on the ground and watched. In a few minutes a tongue of flame was seen to rise from the wood and lick the Chest. Saccarin drew forth his handkerchief and wiped a tear from his cheek.

"Dr Saccarin, I'm expecting ye to play the man," said McTavish. "Ye're a poor preacher compared with Sahara, and there's little marrow in your gospel. But ye're no a woman, nor a babe, that ye should shed tears o' weakness over yon burnings in the valley o' Jehoshaphat. See! The fire's got a muckle hold on your box."

It was even so. The concentrated essence of the meaning of things was evaporating in a fervent heat, and the pith of wisdom from the universal university was dissolving into flame and smoke.

Said McTavish, "Dr Saccarin, I'm thinking there's light enough in yonder flaming fire for a man to see his way to the doing of a good deed."

Saccarin drew a fountain pen from his waistcoat pocket, and presently McTavish saw that the cheque-book was on the Doctor's knee and that he was writing.

"Take that," said Saccarin. "Take it to Dr Sahara. Tell him it is a gift if he will consult my wishes, and a loan if he prefers to stand on his pride."

McTavish took the slip of paper. By the light of the burning Chest he saw that it was a cheque in Sahara's favour for three hundred pounds.

"Dr Saccarin," he said, "ye're a godly man after your ain lights. But ye're no sound on the fundamentals."

V

A PSYCHOLOGIST AMONG THE SAINTS[1]

"Enfin, pour tout dire, nous ne voyons pas les choses mêmes; nous nous bornons le plus souvent, à lire des étiquettes collées sur elles. . . . Et ce ne sont pas seulement les objets extérieurs, ce sont aussi nos propres états d'âme qui se dérobent à nous dans ce qu'ils ont d'intime, de personnel, d'originalement vécu."—HENRI BERGSON, *Le Rire*, pp. 156–7.

THE day's work was done, the family had retired to rest, and the house was still. George Marsh sealed up the last of many letters, drew the curtains closer, and pushed an arm-chair in front of the fire. One quiet hour—the most precious of the day or night—and he too would retire. Should he read or think? He resolved to think.

Not wisely, perhaps; for his mind was troubled, and he began to brood upon a thought. The thought was one which had been nascent within him for months; he had

[1] Originally published in the *Hibbert Journal*.

felt it stirring within him all day long, and as he sat and brooded it was born. "I shall die as I have lived," he said aloud—"an unconverted man. I shall never be converted." And a profound melancholy overpowered him.

George Marsh was fifty-five years of age. By outward seeming he was a successful and very fortunate man. In the matter of health and wealth, of wife and child, he had won and kept what few men win ever and what fewer keep for long. None the less he seemed to himself, as he spread his hands over the dying fire, an utter failure and most unfortunate.

"It has all come to nothing," he said; "it will never come to anything." The clock struck twelve, and George Marsh heard "never" repeated twelve times. "That settles it," he went on, addressing the fire. "I *cannot* be converted now. I know too much."

That day he had finished his course of lectures on "The Psychology of Religion," of which subject he was a professional teacher. The lectures had attracted a great audience, and been a brilliant success. He had been told by a friend that they constituted an "epoch-making event"; not that Marsh himself attached much value to the epithet, for he had heard it too often about books and

things which had been forgotten in a fortnight; but it was pleasant to hear, all the same.

In the last lecture he had dealt with "The Phenomena of Conversion: their Inner Nature and the Laws of their Occurrence." He had laid down the famous "Three Laws of Conversion," "which," said an admirer, "are destined to revolutionise our conceptions of the spiritual realm as completely as Newton's Three Laws of Motion have revolutionised our conceptions of the physical universe." George Marsh ought to have been a proud man.

His brooding continued. "I have made my own conversion impossible," he thought, "by learning to understand conversion. Nay, I have done more—and worse. I have let my audience into the secret, and as I cannot be converted, so neither can they. Once my book is published, conversion will become impossible to its readers for the reasons that make it impossible for me. It must never be published."

Hereupon a sudden impulse seized him. He rose from the fireside and snatched the manuscript of his lectures from the table. He hesitated for the moment, for the best of his life-work lay in those pages.

The door opened, and his wife entered the room.

"What has happened to you?" she said. "It is past two o'clock. Are you going to sit up all night? And what are you doing with those manuscripts?"

"I'm going to throw them into the fire," said Marsh.

"Nonsense!" She snatched them out of his hand and promptly locked them up in a drawer. Mrs Marsh was not unprepared. For many days she had heard her husband's mutterings, and had divined the thought which was working, like a maggot, in his brain. "Now go to bed," said she, "and don't be a fool."

Marsh obeyed; and thus the work "which has produced a revolution in the spiritual realm" was saved for posterity.

George Marsh had spent his life, as all men do, in the pursuit of the Infinite; and the long and short of it is that the quest had failed. Had he pursued the Infinite under the stimulation of alcohol, or the lulling dreams of opium; had he tried the love of women, the heaping up of riches, or the "will-to-power"; had he sought the goal in the secret of per-

petual motion or the squaring of the circle—his failure would have been no more complete. George Marsh had had recourse to none of these things; he had pursued the Infinite along paths which sages had trodden before him; but the Infinite was still uncaptured. This thought added to the bitterness of his defeat.

"I don't believe there *is* any Infinite," he said, "for if there were I should have found it ere now." This was not the language he used in his lectures; but it was language that came into his thoughts as he sat in the silent house on the night when this history begins.

Now, the seekers of the Infinite may be divided into two classes. The first class is represented by any person who may happen to have spent a long morning searching for his lost spectacles and then found them on his nose; the second class by the Irishman who had to find the spectacles before he could look for them. The Infinite and the spectacles have this in common, that you may lose them as readily by putting them in the right place as by putting them in the wrong. Lost in either way, both Infinite and spectacles are equally difficult to find. To which class of

losers George Marsh belonged, I do not know; but he certainly belonged to one of them, for there is no third.

I

He had been brought up in the straitest traditions of Evangelical piety. But the reader must not infer from this that the parents of George Marsh were ignorant and narrow-minded people. They were eminent in every quality that is lovable: in the words of a distinguished American author who spent a month as the family guest, "they were the most lovely people he had ever met." And the same words may be applied to the aged clergyman, a noted Simeonite, who taught the family faith with learning and eloquence, and sustained it by the example of his character and daily life. I remember that circle well, and it stands out in memory like a place of palms and running waters amid the deserts of life. It may be that the prejudice of the years is creeping over me; for among the faces I see around there are none which speak to me of more honourable things. The type, they say, is disappearing; so much the worse for the world.

The evangelical teaching of those days

reposed on a mechanical diagram, precise as if its reference were not to the fate of immortal souls, but to the working of an eight-day clock. This was a source both of strength and of weakness. Of strength, because method, unity, coherence, with all their attendant mnemonic advantages, lay in the diagram; of weakness, because the neophyte was left to his own devices at the most dangerous point in his conversion, the point, namely, where the mechanism had to be transformed into a living thing. Hence it was that many stopped short at the mechanical outline, and play-acting had to do the rest. George Marsh was one of these. Whether the fault was his own, or whether it lay in the system, I cannot decide. But here are the facts.

When George was seventeen those about him became anxious for his conversion, and measures were taken to bring that event to pass. The chief agent in these proceedings was the Simeonite clergyman. He set the appointed mechanism in motion, explained its working, and told the boy what to do and what to expect. All that was required of him in the way of prayer, repentance, faith, and works George was made to understand; and the good Simeonite rested not from his

labours until he was satisfied that the pupil had the lesson well by heart.

Nor was there the least recalcitrancy in George. Anxious as others were for his conversion, he was ten times as anxious himself. Before all things else he desired to be converted. Eagerly he drank in the words of his instructor, and, being a boy of good memory, he repeated the lesson to himself in his leisure moments and made sure that he had got it right.

His knowledge of the way of salvation was perfect; but he could not persuade himself, though he often tried to do so, that he himself was saved. This troubled him greatly. Not that his father or mother worried him about the matter, though he was conscious of their solicitude. They were content to wait upon God's good pleasure and were confident of the result.

The trouble began over the question of Repentance. George was willing, nay eager, to repent of anything, if only he could think of something worth repenting of. But he couldn't. A thousand times he told himself that he was a miserable sinner, but he didn't feel like one, and couldn't for the life of him understand what wrong he had done. It is

true he had fired a pea-shooter at the cat; he had once killed a blackbird; he had kicked a little boy for making faces at him; he had been rude to his aunt; but he had far too much good sense to treat these actions as the needed raw material for a genuine repentance. Once in his father's study he had seen a cash-box lying open on the table and had seriously debated the question of stealing a sovereign, in order to get a point of departure. But again his good sense came to the rescue. God was not likely to be deceived by so shallow a trick.

He took the difficulty to his spiritual adviser, from whom he learnt that he had been on the "wrong tack" in hunting for particular sins; that this was the false Romish method of dealing with human nature; that the root of the evil lay further back. Then the clergyman reminded him of his fallen condition. This George never doubted for an instant; he admitted it was a most lamentable state of affairs; but somehow the admission made no difference. After a good night's rest he woke up feeling just as jolly as if the Fall were unhistorical. Then it occurred to him that feeling jolly was the very sin of which he had to repent, for what

fallen creature has a right to feel anything but miserable? So he fell on his knees, convinced that repentance had at last begun. "O Lord," he said, "I am very miserable because I felt so jolly just now. I repent of my fallen state." A moment later—for he was an honest boy—he cried, "O Lord, it's a lie. I'm only pretending. I'm not miserable at all." But he *was* miserable all the same.

As the days wore on his misery increased until it became intolerable. But one night a thought flashed through George's brain and gave him instant relief. "This misery," he suddenly reflected, "*is* my repentance. Why, I have been repenting all along without knowing it! Hurrah!" His devotions ended, he went to his collar-drawer and took out a card hidden under the white paper which covered the bottom of the drawer. On this card he had written down the scheme of salvation under numbered heads. He now put a tick against Repentance, to indicate that the event had taken place. It was one of the happiest moments in his life.

But a new difficulty arose in regard to Faith. Here again he followed his instructions to the letter. The Simeonite told him

what he must believe; and it fell under three heads. George was confident he would have no difficulty in believing them all, both in severalty and in combination. He fell asleep saying to himself for the hundredth time that he believed; and he went on saying it in his dreams. Next day he remembered his professions overnight, and looked in his heart for signs of the new birth that was to follow. But he couldn't find them. Again there seemed to be no difference. "Perhaps," he reflected, "the trouble comes from my not believing *enough*. I'll have another try to-night. I must *realise* these things." So he hit upon a plan. He wrote out the required acts of faith on three separate cards, and when night came he placed them in turn under the light of the gas, staring fixedly at each for many minutes and trying to *realise* what it meant. This went on for weeks. But it was no good. The only tangible result was that George had to take sleeping-draughts, to pay a visit to the oculist, and to wear blue spectacles for three months. But there was no new birth; at least there was nothing that he could identify under that description.

Of all the accessory exercises he neglected none. He prayed, and read his Bible, making

strenuous efforts to "take in" what it meant, and staring at the great and blessed words, just as he stared at his card, until the letters swam together and his head ached. All in vain. Do what he would, he couldn't get himself converted.

Then it occurred to him that perhaps he had been converted all the time without knowing it. The episode of his repentance might be repeated in his conversion as a whole. This gave him a passing comfort, and sent him to the Simeonite with the question on his lips, "What does it *feel like* when you are saved?" The Simeonite, in all kindliness and sincerity, told him what it "felt like." George groaned in spirit and said, "I don't feel like that—not one little bit." He was not converted, after all.

Nevertheless the interview was not without its fruits. Following his former practice, George, on returning home, wrote down on a card a list of the "feelings" that would arise within him at the hour of his new birth. He wrote them down in the very words of the Simeonite. "At all events," he reflected, "I now know what I am to expect. As soon as any of these feelings begin I shall know that I'm coming all right."

Every night, and at other times as well, he would draw forth his card of "feelings" and run his eye down the list. "Nothing to-day" was the usual result. "I've not felt any one of them." Sometimes he would get a little hope. "Numbers 1 to 5—nothing. But Number 6—well, I did feel a bit like that when I saw those two drunken men being taken to prison. I must try to get it back again. O Lord, I thank Thee for giving me a little of Number 6—give me some more, I beseech Thee. And oh, for Thy great Name's sake, give me Numbers 1 to 5." But the heavens were deaf.

The spiritual pathologist who was doctoring George's soul, having failed in his first course of treatment, tried another. He presented the boy on his eighteenth birthday with the works of John Bunyan; and his aunt—the one to whom he had been rude—added Law's *Serious Call.* Into this literature he launched forth, the Simeonite and the aunt standing on the banks, as it were, to give him his sailing directions. He relaxed none of his efforts. He was willing to embark on the very waters of death, on the bare chance of finding "saving truth." He would have eagerly swallowed the bitterest soul-medicine; and when medicine

failed he would have submitted to the cruelest surgery, even to a capital operation, without anæsthetics, had such a thing been proposed. As a matter of fact, in his desperation, he did macerate his poor body in many ways, until the thing was discovered by the Simeonite and checked as a Romish error—of which George stood in the utmost fear. He spent whole nights in agonising prayer. The result was that for the second time he passed out of the care of his ghostly physician and was handed over to those who heal the body. This brought some relief to his weary nerves and palpitating heart.

Then it was that George plunged into his birthday literature. He began with *The Pilgrim's Progress* and followed it with *Grace abounding to the Chief of Sinners.* And now his miseries came back upon him in a flood. Let no one suppose, however, that they bore the least resemblance to the appalling woes of John Bunyan. They did not—and there was the trouble. To be able to reproduce the Bunyan-agony was the very thing that George desired. But he could not reproduce it, though he tried with all his might. He would have given a king's ransom to feel that Satan was at his elbow. But Satan never

came near him. George took solitary walks in the darkness and tried to imagine that the whispering winds were the voices of fiends. But he knew very well that they were nothing of the sort. One night he actually found himself praying to the devil to come out and fight him. But the devil was as deaf as the rest—at all events, he was in no humour for a fight with George Marsh. Then he stole out all alone to a dark lane, the high banks crowned with interlocking trees that formed a tunnel. This was the Valley of Humiliation. An old ilex grew in the ditch. As George, who was now growing short-sighted, saw the shadowy form swaying in the wind, he tried to feel sure that Apollyon was advancing in all his fury. But he didn't feel sure. Nevertheless, on coming up to the tree, he made three passes at it with his stick, and then struck it a heavy, back-handed blow. The tree didn't care a pin, and George knew it didn't care. He tried to make the tree say, "Now I have thee," and, finding it silent, he stabbed into its foliage again and again until a swaying branch knocked his cap off.

On another occasion the poor boy tied his old school-books into a big bundle, which he

strapped on to his shoulders like a knapsack, and walked a long mile to another tree, a tree with bare arms outstretched, which suggested Something to George. He wanted to know "what it felt like," and thought that the experiment might prompt the beginning of "the real experience." Coming to the foot of the tree his back was nearly broken, and, the buckle of the strap refusing to yield, George, who felt he couldn't stand the weight another minute, cut the leather with his pocket-knife. The bundle fell to the ground with a heavy thud and burst, and his big Latin dictionary flounced into a puddle; the mud can be seen on its pages even unto this day. He spent the rest of the night cleaning his books, for the boy was fearful of being found out.

II

His failure to "act Bunyan" caused him an infinite melancholy, and well-nigh broke his heart. This was his condition when the time came for him to go to the University. He was no longer the healthy boy who had discharged his pea-shooter at a cat. He was a tall, weedy youth of nineteen; there was a stoop in the narrow shoulders, and an ugly

wrinkle between the eyes; he wore spectacles and looked on the ground.

He was sent to Oxford with a view, of course, to taking Orders. He was entered at a college where the Church influence was strong, and of the sort approved by his spiritual guides. "It will all come right in due time," said the Simeonite to George's parents. "The work of grace is only being delayed—no doubt for wise reasons. It is often so. We must wait in faith and prayer. I doubt if George will find peace until he begins the active work of the ministry." From which remark it will be seen that the excellent man was at his wits' end. To George he said, "Don't be over-anxious, my dear boy. Continue to pray and to read your Bible. One day you will feel something break within you, and then the new birth will begin."

So the boy went to Oxford expecting something to "break" within him. He kept a diary, and each entry for the first six weeks concluded with these words, "Nothing has broken to-day."

But the pressure had been forced to the bursting-point, and an explosion was inevitable. In the seventh week of his first term

the explosion took place; but it assumed a form and produced results which no one in the least expected or foresaw. In this it resembled all the conversions that have taken place since the world began.

One day he was on the tow-path watching the practice of his College crew. He wished he could row. His long arms and legs, he thought, would give him a splendid reach; and no doubt with a little training he could straighten his back and broaden his chest.

The wind was keen, and the water was rough. The coach on the tow-path was abusing Number 4 for his bad recovery, and Number 4 was listening to the coach with an air of admirable docility. Somehow Number 4, as he listened to the coach, reminded George of himself as he used to listen to the Simeonite; and for a moment religion and rowing were strangely mixed up in his mind.

The Cox cried "Paddle!" and the eight oars struck the water, once, twice, three times. Then came confusion. Something was wrong with Number 4. He failed to recover; his sliding seat gave way with a crash; his oar was in the air, his body at the bottom of the boat, and in an instant the whole thing was

overturned and the crew were struggling in the water. The coach swore a mighty oath, the dripping crew waded ashore, and a thought flashed like lightning through George's brain. "By——!" he said aloud, echoing the words of the coach, "it's all one piece of humbug from beginning to end. I'm going to chuck religion."

Had the youth paused to analyse what he "felt like" at that moment he would have noticed that he was feeling almost everything which the Simeonite had said he would feel at his first effective encounter with saving truth. He would have noticed that a great burden had rolled from his back and that his body, his whole being, was buoyant as air. He would have been aware that something "had broken" within him; he might even have heard it "go snap" in the middle of his head. He would have perceived a strange luminosity in the atmosphere, and he would have heard voices saying anything it pleased him to make them say.

But he had no leisure for introspection. He was in a hurry to do something and was busily thinking what he would do. He resembled a friend of mine who studies seismography in a Midland town. This

gentleman had been longing all his life for an earthquake to shake his house. Hearing that some shocks had been felt in the neighbourhood, he sent his seismograph to the makers to be adjusted. Hardly had he parted with his instrument when a slight shock, the only shock felt in that city for a hundred years, rattled the crockery on his dinner-table. So it was with George. His conversion took place at an unguarded moment when the means for recording it were out of gear. He failed, therefore, to make a mental entry of its arrival; thereby inadvertently proving the genuineness of the occurrence.

George rushed from the tow-path, made his way to the nearest public-house, and ordered a glass of beer—a drink which he held in peculiar abhorrence. He took a sip and replaced the glass on the counter; a sweep emptied it the moment he turned his back. Next he went to the tobacconist and bought a pipe and an ounce of tobacco—which he never smoked; thence, to the bookseller's for the last sensational novel—which he never read. Arrived at his College room, his first act was to fling Law's *Serious Call* out of the window; five minutes later he went out into the quad and picked it up. This was the

beginning of George's education in iniquity—but he never followed it up.

His conversion was not so complete—what conversion ever is?—as to effect a total breach between his present and his past. The idea of some entirely new state of being, arriving with cataclysmic abruptness, and bringing with it a new consciousness, continued to haunt him. This idea, which he had first imbibed under the forms of the Evangelical tradition, now took other forms, but its principle remained unchanged. As the artists in *Punch* exaggerate the length of the Prime Minister's nose while respecting the general formula of its construction, thereby endowing him with what is, to all intents and purposes, a false nose, but without doing injustice to the original, so George obtained his new opinions by slightly caricaturing the salient features of the old.

It is true that George had become a prominent member of that drastic body—the Young Men's Latter-Day Association. But if you had listened to him as he aired his views at the weekly meetings of the Association, on the New Era, the New Order, the New Morality, the New Thought, the New Man, the New Woman, the New Everybody,

the New Everything, you would have recognised at once that he was still preaching the New Birth, with a slight difference of accent and terminology. At nineteen years of age he was an adept in the Signs of the Times; and his Scheme of Salvation was if anything more completely articulated, and assuredly more dogmatically enforced, than is that other Scheme, to indoctrinate him in which the good Simeonite had taken such pains. His Eschatology was worked out with that attention to minute detail which becomes a great commander in planning a campaign. If you wished to know what would happen to yourself under the New Order—whether, for example, you would be allowed to retain your latch-key—George could tell you. Latch-keys would be public property. If you asked what treatment would be meted out to Mrs Brown, who was just going to have her seventeenth baby, George could tell you. Mrs Brown would receive from the State a retiring pension and a medal. A certain group of young gentlemen called "we" had settled all that; they had the Future in their waistcoat-pockets, and they were going to stand no nonsense at all. These young gentlemen lived in close and conscious proximity to a

Great Event—a trait so precious, whether in youth or in age, that if egotism or excess should appear among its by-products we can welcome both. Egotistical and extravagant they undoubtedly were. In their own eyes they were the Saints of the New Order and the Elect of the Future, and they had little doubt that when the Great Upheaval came, as it assuredly would come in a few years, the brains of the entire human race would be turned inside out, while they themselves, so to speak, would be caught up into the air and set on thrones to judge the nations of the world. These Eschatologists were most excellent young men; the root of the matter was in them; they were pursuing the Infinite after their own fashion—and half of them are now dead. Some died in their mothers' arms, and the lilacs bloom above their graves; India has accounted for others; one, still a youth, the war correspondent of a London paper, was shot through the heart while taking notes in a square attacked by savages; one, grown grey in many battles, was blown to fragments by a shell in South Africa, and all they ever found of him was the hand on which he wore his dead wife's wedding-ring. Of the survivors I know of one who is an Archdeacon; another

is a captain of industry and a philanthropist; and only the other day a third, who is a judge, broke down before the court while sentencing a wretched murderer to death. Fundamentally they were not mistaken. The Great Event has happened to most of them, and proved more surprising than their most confident predictions or their wildest dreams.

I am sorry to say that dissensions presently broke out in the Young Men's Latter-Day Association, and some of the more prominent members were driven into exile. From what the schism arose I do not know; perhaps it was the Election of the Committee, though I rather think it was the Constitution of the Universe. Among the exiles was George Marsh. He was not aware of any change in his principles; but there was some bad temper, and it was a noteworthy circumstance that from the date of his expulsion the books which had been previously open on George's table were now stowed away on the least accessible of his shelves.

III

Those were stirring times for young men. The enthusiasm created by Carlyle had hardly begun its present lamentable decline; the

bloom was still fresh on the *Origin of Species*; Huxley was firing great shot at the Towers of Darkness; Tennyson was in song; Ruskin was hard at work. Matthew Arnold, too, was at his best; and George Marsh, who began to browse in fresh fields, read *Literature and Dogma*, then a new book.

Now George, whether by temperament or by early education, was never happy save in pursuit of a Secret. The locked chamber of a New Experience always adjoined the plain apartment in which he lived, and George's business throughout was to find the key to that chamber and *get* the Experience that awaited him within. The experience that is was never good enough for him; the experience that is not, but may be, was what he must have. *Literature and Dogma* was therefore the very book to lay hold of him. For *Literature and Dogma*, as everyone knows, deals with a certain Secret, held forth as the vital principle of religion. Now, with religion George had resolved that he would have no more to do. But when he found, in conjunction with the denial of his rejected faith, the positive assertion of a new Secret, the young man at once pricked up his ears and became docile. The Secret seemed genuine. He re-

solved, therefore, that he would have it by hook or by crook, and he applied himself, heart and soul, to follow the directions given in *Literature and Dogma*. Not being sceptical by nature, he didn't pause to ask whether a Secret which worked so mightily while it remained a Secret would retain its efficacy after it had been found out and retailed in the booksellers' shops at so much a copy.

Behold him then with *Literature and Dogma* under the lamp, a blue pencil in his fingers, a notebook at his elbow. He learns that the Secret consists in a certain sweet reasonableness; that the way to the Secret is Conduct; that Conduct is three-fourths of life; that Religion is morality touched with Emotion; that there is a Something, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness; that the righteous have experimental proof that this Something is real. Each of these propositions is duly recorded. George is a little perplexed as to their relations with one another; but he infers that if he duly attends to Conduct the various propositions will relate themselves in a New Experience and so give him possession of the Secret.

Poor boy! You are too deeply in earnest; you are repeating your old mistake. If you

would take what is written as so many themes for Literature, or as a true record of what can never be exactly repeated, or even as matter to preach about, it would all prove manageable enough. But these things will bring you into trouble if you read them as fixed Sailing Directions for the human soul on the fateful seas of life. And that, unfortunately, is what you are going to do!

Without delay George proceeded to put his new recipe into practice. He betook himself to Conduct; made it not three-fourths merely but the whole of his life, or very nearly the whole; put himself under the severest self-discipline and studied Conduct with an ardour truly admirable. I am afraid—indeed, I know—that he encountered much bewilderment, and found many moral questions hard to decide which had seemed easy enough before he began to think about them; moreover, he sometimes lost sight of great principles in the confusion of detail which attends their application. But he did his best; no Rabbi of olden time could have found much fault with him. He knew, of course, the dangers of self-righteousness, but guarded himself against them by a method of his own. What with one thing and another, he had a hard time of

it. But he stuck to his task, hourly expecting the Secret to disclose itself, and looking into himself for signs that the New Experience was coming to the birth.

Now, I am not going to say that all this effort was wasted. From what I know of George Marsh I am inclined to think that it did him more good than all the rest of his education put together, and there are several young gentlemen of my acquaintance whom I would urgently advise to take a leaf out of this part of George's book. None the less it must be recorded that in one sense the enterprise was a failure. True, he found a Secret and got a New Experience; but the Secret he found was not the Secret he sought, and the New Experience he got was not the New Experience he expected. Furthermore—and this is the most important of all—it was not till nearly thirty years had elapsed after the cessation of these efforts that he realised they had yielded him any Secret or any Experience whatsoever.

His great difficulty lay not in the practice of morality—though this was often hard enough—but in securing "the touch of emotion." The morality came, but the emotion seemed to linger. Here, however, he was again mis-

taken ; and the mistake was a repetition, with a difference, of one he had made on former occasions. He had formed in advance a certain notion of what it would "feel like"; but it felt like something else. When, therefore, the emotion came—and it came in abundance—it was so entirely different from what he had expected that he failed, as before, to recognise that it was emotion at all.

George had expected exultations and splendid agonies. What came was depression and carking care. When he read the word "emotion" on the printed page he thought of thrills, of splendours, of ecstasies ; of Love that is mightier than death ; of Peace that is deeper than the sea ; of Compassions that moan like the winds ; of luxurious griefs ; of overwhelming visions from the mountain-tops of life ; of music, starry spaces, and the calm of ancient groves and vast cathedrals ; of the flowers that never fade and the odours that are wafted from Elysian fields. These were the emotions whose "touch" upon morality would clothe the dry bones with flesh and put the living spirit within them. But George had not reflected that there are emotions of another order ; that these, too, may "touch" morality and transform it not into the likeness

of life, but into the very dust of death. And these were the emotions that actually came and "touched" poor George; they came in secret; came like thieves in the night; came without any labels on their backs; came and went without suffering him to know their names or even to observe that they had come. Instead of the scent of flowers he felt the prick of thorns; instead of exultations there was anxiety; instead of the victor's crown there was the yoke of self-contempt; instead of great music there was the crack of whips; instead of the joy of attainment there was the lurking horrible fear that he was becoming a moral prig. With all these unexpected emotions there mingled a feeling of bitter disappointment at the non-arrival of the emotions that were expected; and this bitterness was itself the principal emotion that touched the morality of George Marsh. In fine, he was intensely miserable, and his misery was his emotion. "Oh, wretched man that I am," he might have cried, "who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

He was satisfied that he had made no mistakes. He was confident that he understood the construction of this new machine, that he had put the parts together in the right

order, that he had got his steam to the right pressure, that he had pulled the levers in the right way. How was it, then, that the wretched thing wouldn't work? Why, of course, there was only one explanation. "It was a piece of humbug from beginning to end. It never had worked and never could work. I'm going to chuck morality," said George.

IV

For a whole twelvemonth or more George lived under the firm belief that he had "chucked" morality. And he certainly did "chuck" it in the papers he read before the College Dialectical Society, and in temerarious conversations with certain gentlemen who were twice his own age. These gentlemen were much concerned for his future, and took pains to convince him of the error of his ways—or rather of his words. The result was that his "views" became more startling and scandalous. He even went so far as to sketch the ground-plan of one or two splendid sins. Meanwhile he was living a most innocent life and reading poetry. He began with Swinburne, and in due course—for he was no slave to chronological order—he came to Wordsworth.

His first attitude to Wordsworth was contemptuous. But he was too well-born, and too innocent, to keep that up for long. Besides, there was something in Wordsworth that touched the deepest spring of his being. It was the hint of another world—a world of New Experience, to which entry could be found by the lifting of a veil. Before George had finished the second reading of *The Prelude* he had repented of his resolve to "chuck" morality. Then he turned to *The Excursion*, some parts of which had a reviving effect on the abandoned resolution. But when he came to the *Vision of the Wanderer*, he was completely conquered. He laid down the volume with a fixed resolve that that Vision should be his own. The prophets, he thought, had deceived him, but the poet cannot lie.

His preparations were made with the forethought which characterised all his spiritual experiments. He studied the *Vision* and everything that has been written about it. He made acquaintance with certain philosophers who have used the *Vision* as a text. He even went into a kind of training for the Great Event, kept a watch on his thoughts, took lonely walks into the country, and practised Visions from the modest hill-

tops of the neighbourhood. George was a little disconcerted with the result of these preliminary exercises; but he set it down to the tameness of the local scenery.

He had ascertained the exact spot in the Lake District at which the Vision of the Wanderer is supposed to have occurred, and he had taken up his quarters at the nearest hotel. He waited until the conditions were perfect for the experiment; watched the barometer, and felt his pulse; deferred action the first day because the clouds threatened; started the second, and then came back because his head was not clear. On the third day health and weather were both favourable, and, with prayers on his lips, he took his way to the sacred spot. Arrived there, all seemed to promise him fair. He drew the volume from his pocket and read the *Vision* aloud. As he read, the sun rose in all its splendour, and the world was bathed in glory. George waited for Something to Happen.

Nothing happened.

"Nothing happened." These were his own words when he told me the story in after years. But they are not true to the fact, and they illustrate once more the tendency of his introspective faculty to overlook what was

essential in his experience. Something *did* happen—something not in the formula. *The whole experiment fell flat as any thrice-told tale.* He was looking at sublimities beyond the power of words; the world was drenched in loveliness and light; but for any ecstasy produced in George he might as well have been gazing at a miserable collection of stage properties. Under other circumstances he would have taken a healthy soul's delight in what he saw, and would certainly have forgotten himself. But at this moment the mountains wore a perky air of artificiality, as though they had got themselves up for their parts; the heavens had been painted blue by some self-conscious impressionist; the clouds seemed made of cotton-wool; all was mechanism and vulgar pretence; and so far was that would-be visionary from entering into rapt communion with Nature, that never in his life did he experience so deep a sense of loneliness and utter separation from the world. His self-consciousness became intense, and it was the consciousness of an outcast. He fixed his eyes on the loftiest peak, and the impression deepened that the thing was sham. He looked up to the sky, and became suddenly conscious that his right boot

was pinching him. He listened to the bleating of sheep in the valley below, and instantly, to his shame, he thought of mutton-chops. A shy primrose attracted his attention; he recalled Peter Bell, stared at the primrose for full five minutes, concluded that he had never seen so uninteresting a flower, and then, feeling a sharp pain in his eyeballs, remembered the warnings of his oculist. Was some spirit mocking him? Or was Nature offended at his errand? With these questions in his mind he rushed down the mountain, ate a scanty breakfast, packed his copy of Wordsworth at the bottom of his trunk, and took the next train home.

V

It may be thought that with three disappointments placed to his credit George would now abandon his attempt to obtain Initiation into the Mysteries. But the chains of destiny are not so easily broken. Fate had decreed that he should turn a blind eye to his experience and attend only to his experiments. The New Experience for which he was ever on the watch was to come as the result of a New Experiment conducted according to formula. If an experi-

ment failed, it was because the formula was faulty and needed amendment. George was none of your faint-hearted seekers who abandon the quest on the failure of their first attempts. He thought of Science, and remembered the disappointments of the laboratory. He saw the great discoverers testing hypothesis after hypothesis, conducting fruitless experiments by the score, trying this and trying that until in a happy moment they hit upon the formula which covered the facts. Had he experienced fifty disappointments instead of three, he would have proceeded with unabated ardour to make the fifty-first.

The next experiment lasted over twenty years. When George had taken his degree he resolved, with the advice of his tutors, to devote himself to the study of Philosophy. In a few years he became a notable exponent of Pantheism, wrote a book, and received an academical appointment. It was whispered that he had become a Buddhist.

During the whole of that period he seemed to himself on the very eve of success, never quite attaining, but so near attainment as to leave no doubt in his mind that he had found the right formula at last. Meanwhile the river of life was pouring its waters under the

mill, and every moment marked the birth of a New Experience and the initiation into a Mystery. But he was not attending to that. As usual, he was busy with an Experiment.

In his pantheistic period George was fully convinced that the sensible world is an illusion, and that he himself was no more than a stain on the radiance of Eternity. The trouble was that his "feelings" didn't keep pace with his convictions, and this emotional impotence was exceedingly hard to cure. He found himself utterly unable to "realise" the illusoriness of the world—which is not to be wondered at; and he had to confess that in himself he didn't "feel like" a stain—on Eternity or on anything else. Nay, there was something more; and students of Marsh's *System of Philosophy* will remember that the matter is fully discussed in the chapter entitled "The Inverse Ratio of Conviction and Feeling." The fact was, that by as much as the logic became irrefragable which demonstrates that the world is an illusion, by so much the more did the "feeling" grow that the world is intensely real. He found, moreover, that the very ease with which he could prove, on paper, that he was Nothing gave him, oddly

enough, the "feeling" that he was Something. He also noticed that the process of handling particular things by the Pantheistic Logic had a kind of indurating effect upon their substance, in consequence of which those things refused to melt at the moment when, theoretically, they ought to have dissolved themselves into the All. Again it was rather disconcerting; but he set it down to some defect, or excess, in his imaginative faculty.

He resolved, therefore, to make himself acquainted with the facts of Conversion as recorded in the mystical literature of all ages, in the hope that these would incidentally reveal what was wrong with him. For ten years he devoted himself to this study with unremitting ardour. The result was that he became an authority on mysticism, obtained qualifications which caused him to be appointed to his lectureship in the Psychology of Religion, and discovered the "Three Laws of Conversion" which have produced a revolution in the spiritual realm, and made the discoverer famous all over the world. But at the end of it all George Marsh remained an unconverted man.

Then occurred the incident related at the beginning of this narrative.

VI

As the lightning which shineth from the one part of heaven even unto the other, so is the coming of everything that is critically important for the human mind. No prophet can foretell the hour, the place, or the form. The secret chambers are empty; the wilderness utters no sound; two men are in one bed; two women are grinding at the mill; and the pendulum of time swings undisturbed. Suddenly the Sign of the Son of Man leaps across the sky and astonishment falls on the face of all the earth. The effect is visible, but the cause is hidden; and History, seeking to recover it, can find no more than the Shadow of a Shade.

There happened to be living at this time, in a remote part of the country, a certain poor and solitary man, the only religious genius I have ever seen in the flesh. A stream, famous for trout, ran across the line of this Poor Man's beat: and it was not altogether without design on my part that George Marsh, who was an ardent fisherman, spent a summer on the banks of that stream. And later on—through the intervention of another person—the two became friends.

From that time his luck as a fisherman seemed to desert him. Day after day he came back with his basket empty. But the truth was that, as often as not, he had never cast a fly on the water. He had been wandering in solitary places seeking out the Poor Man.

"He's a most extraordinary person," said George to me.

"So are we all," I added.

"True. That's precisely what I have learnt from him. Do you know, he's the only religious man I ever met whose religion was not at least three parts an imitation. In him the proportions are reversed. I wish I had known him before I wrote my big book. He has upset one of my theories."

"He has upset several of mine," I said.

Five years later George Marsh passed away after a lingering and painful illness. I saw him often during that period, and never did he appear to me a disappointed man.

Once he said to me, "I am thinking of writing my Autobiography. It would throw some light on the Psychology of Religion; more, by far, than anything I have written hitherto. Of all the facts I have discovered in my studies, none is so wonderful as the course

of my own life. It has been an amazing experience. As I lie here and recall what has happened, it seems to me that I have been an instrument in the hands of some inscrutable Power. At times I fall into a state of pure astonishment. But I am glad that things were as they have been; after all, nothing has come amiss, nothing has been unkindly done."

Later on, when the end was drawing near, I found him with Harnack's *Wesen des Christentums* open on the coverlet. "Somehow," he said to me, "I think that Harnack has missed the essence of Christianity. If a man tried to be a Christian on the lines of Harnack's definition[1] he would get into all my old difficulties."

"Where do *you* find the essence of Christianity?" I asked.

"In the Parable of the Great Surprise," he answered.

"Which do you mean?" I asked. "All the Parables are 'Great Surprises' in a sense."

"Yes; but the one I mean is not merely a surprising Parable; it is the Parable *of* a Surprise." And then he began to quote, "Lord, *when* saw we thee an hungered," and so on to the end.

[1] "Eternal life in the midst of time, by the strength and under the eyes of God."—T. B. Saunders' translation.

"George," I added after a little, "*He* never said what people expected He was going to say."

"Nor *did* what people thought He ought to do. His sayings are like great explosions, and His deeds are much the same. At least"—and here he seemed to correct himself—"it is the unexpected which has left its impress on the record. Miracles are the only fitting atmosphere for such a character. By the way, I have an idea for a new theory of the Dual Nature of Christ which you may add, if you like, to the multitude already in existence." And a faint smile came over the wan features of my friend.

"Tell it me."

"He was Man in so far as He did what was expected, and God in so far as He took the world by surprise."

"Rank heresy," I said, "from every point of view. Orthodoxy would be furious to hear it; and scientific theology would condemn you for degrading the Modern Conception of God."

"Perhaps both parties would make some allowance," he answered, "if they had had an experience like mine. It's no uncomfortable faith even for a man in my condition. Life and death and all that lies beyond fall into the

same category. Or rather they fall into no category at all. I've not done with surprises. There are others in store for me." And his white fingers began to fumble with the sheets.

In the Chapel of his College a brass tablet has been erected to the memory of George Marsh. It simply gives his name and age, and states that "he was a distinguished member of this University." At his wife's request no mention was made of his services to the Psychology of Religion. But she caused these words to be added at the foot, and I think she must have heard them from his own lips, for he had often used them even to me—

"Marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."

VI

A TRAGEDY OF PARLIAMENT

THE five members of the Casuists' Club had been selected, from among a large number of candidates, on the ground of their exceptionally high qualifications for the business in hand. Professor Digweed, O.M., the historian, represented the Concrete Fact, and his function was to bring every Abstraction to book. Dr Gwinneyfrog, the great mental specialist, had a mixed constituency: he stood for broad-mindedness, good fellowship, and psychological science. Mr Pottertike, the celebrated mathematician, was the Quantitative Critic and the Judge of Conclusiveness. Colonel Applebag, of the Indian Army, retired, was the Director of Practical Applications: he contributed Common Sense, and was regarded as the mouthpiece of an intelligent but unsophisticated Public—the Superman in the Super-street. To Panhandle, the President, fell the onerous task of effecting the synthesis of all

these contributions and setting them in the light of the Highest Possible Point of View. Panhandle was a metaphysician.

This Club or Parliament met once a week, at Panhandle's residence, for the discussion of a set problem, the sessions being held on Sunday evening by preference. After a suitable repast cigars were lighted and the question of the day laid on the table. It was usual to present the question, at first, in a rough and sketchy form, and to spend three-quarters of an hour, and more if the President judged it necessary, in defining the terms, eliminating ambiguities, and giving to the whole expression the utmost simplicity and exactness. Great care and attention were devoted to this matter, and large powers in dealing with it were accorded to the President, the Club having found that if the question was too closely defined it always answered itself, rendering further discussion unnecessary and thus defeating the object for which the Club had been founded. On the other hand, if the question were too loosely defined it could not be answered at all.

When the season was favourable and the weather fine the Parliament would be held in the garden, which was large and umbrageous,

being well planted with deodars and stately Wellingtonias. The company took their seats under the shade of one of these great trees and looked out towards a broad and deep river which skirted the southern side of the sloping lawn.

On the occasion of which we have now to learn the session took place in the garden, and this not only because the evening was singularly calm and beautiful, but also because, as Dr Gwinneyfrog pointed out, the presence of water in the outlook would help to create a mental atmosphere favourable to the discussion of the particular problem in debate.

The task of propounding the question of the evening had fallen to the turn of Colonel Applebag, whose skill in timing his propositions in relation to the course of public events was one of the great assets of the Club; and Panhandle, who possessed a right of veto in these matters, had intimated his approval. The question ran as follows:—

"Suppose Count Zeppelin were discovered in a drowning condition by a member of this Club, ought the said member to leave Count Zeppelin to drown?"

No sooner was the question propounded than exception to its form was taken by several

members, especially by Pottertike, warmly supported by Digweed. Pottertike's objection was that as a precise name and personality had been assigned to the drowning man, an equally precise name and personality must be assigned to the individual charged with the responsibility of leaving him, or not leaving him, to drown. By defining the one as Count Zeppelin, and the other in the more general form as "a member of this Club," the balance of the proposition was left uneven between the abstract and the concrete, and there was no true equation of thought.

Digweed pleaded for a yet finer particularity. The problem, he said, would be found insoluble without the introduction of definite time-data. A great difference would be made, for example, according as the incident was presumed to occur before, during, or after the War. What might be the right course of action at one time might be wholly wrong at another.

Dr Gwinneyfrog went still further on the same line. Mental science, he said, could not deal with the question at all unless the precise time of day were specified: for example, nine o'clock in the evening, when the agent had presumably dined and finished his cigar, and the general state of the circulation was favour-

able to broad thinking and prompt action; or, on the other hand, two o'clock in the morning —or, to be quite accurate, twenty-five minutes past two,—when courage and circulation alike were at the lowest ebb. These, he added, were considerations of first importance to the moral bearings of the question; to which Pottertike assented.

Colonel Applebag now insisted that the means of possible rescue should be defined—as, for example, a boat, a boathook, a punt, a rope, a lifebuoy, or swimming on the part of the rescuer. Further, he asked, is Count Zeppelin assumed to be a swimmer; and does the rescuer know whether the Count can swim? "You can never tell," he said, "whether you ought or ought not to do a thing until you have *all* your tools spread out on the table. In the Army, for example, you can never say to a man that he ought to fire on the enemy unless you know that he has a gun which covers the range; and, for the matter of that, you should also know the range of the enemy's gun, for he's certain to fire back—a point I was never tired of impressing on my subalterns in India."

A further criticism, which everyone at once recognised as vital, was added by Digweed.

"We must know," he said, "whether Count Zeppelin *wants* to be rescued; and not only so, but whether he wants to be rescued by the particular member of the Club named in the problem. Surely we must credit the drowning man with a will, and preferences of his own. I can understand, for example, that Zeppelin might be willing enough to let Applebag rescue him, but would prefer death to rescue by Panhandle."

This last remark provoked a smile in the company, especially on the genial face of Panhandle, who was the soul of good nature and tolerance. It was a covert allusion to Panhandle's metaphysical conversation, which the historian regarded as an insufferable nuisance.

Thus it came to pass that the first half of the session was consumed in discussing the form of the question. And now Panhandle, foreseeing that the time was at hand when further specifications would cause the question to answer itself, and so defeat discussion, declared the debate to be open. Due consideration, he said, had been given to all suggestions and criticisms; and the question in its final form would run as follows:—

"Suppose Count Zeppelin, who is known to

be a fair swimmer, and wants to be saved by the person named in the next clause, is discovered in a drowning condition by Panhandle, who cannot swim at all, during the War, at nine o'clock in the evening, after Panhandle has dined, with a sufficient lifebuoy handy, ought Panhandle to leave him to drown?"

There was still some grumbling at the lack of definition in the problem, first from Dr Gwinneyfrog, who claimed that "we ought to know what Panhandle is assumed to have eaten for dinner, and whether he has had any wine, and, if so, how much and of what kind"; while Colonel Applebag declared that it would be impossible for him to give a vote unless he knew a great deal more about that lifebuoy beyond the information contained in the vague statement that it was "sufficient," citing a case from his experience in India, in which the lifebuoy, being smeared with a certain preparation of grease to protect it from the weather, had attracted a big crocodile, which had swallowed both man and lifebuoy just as they were being hauled ashore.

But Panhandle was inexorable. He reminded the audience that every discussion is ultimately dependent on the Will-to-Begin, of which, as well as of the Will-to-End, he, as

President, was the authorised mouthpiece. In virtue of his authority he declared that the moment for exercising the Will-to-Begin had arrived. "The debate," he repeated, "is now open."

The discussion which followed, like all the discussions of this Parliament, was well sustained and thorough. Count Zeppelin's fate was regarded from every possible angle of vision. The moral, the political, the social, the physiological, the military aspects of the question were well considered, both on their individual merits and in their relation to one another. Digweed held the debate anchored in the concrete; Panhandle touched it with the broad light of the abstract; Pottertike reduced it to its lowest terms; Gwinneyfrog gave it atmosphere; while Applebag, like the chorus in a Greek tragedy, kept up a running comment of common sense.

The sun was just sinking beyond the hills of the further side of the river when Panhandle, looking round on the company with a benignant smile, announced that the moment had come to exercise the Will-to-End, and called for the Vote.

The Vote was unanimous. Count Zeppelin in the circumstances assigned was condemned

to death: Panhandle was to leave him to drown.

"Since the Club was established," said Panhandle, "I have never known a conclusion come out so clearly."

"It was a foregone conclusion from the start," said Applebag.

"I've been greatly impressed by the mass and volume of the arguments," said Pottertike.

"None of our discussions has ever had a better tone," said Gwinneyfrog.

"But the result would have been very different if Pottertike had been the rescuer instead of Panhandle," said the rasping voice of Digweed. "We could never have proved that Pottertike had not the right to follow his infernal conscience; and we all know what Pottertike's conscience would have decreed."

This was another covert allusion on the part of Digweed. Pottertike was suspected of leanings to pro-Germanism, and everybody understood that this was Digweed's way of egging him on to a controversy about the origin of the war, a question which had often imperilled the friendly relations of the Club. Colonel Applebag, who was a born tactician, saw the drift and at once diverted the current.

"Do you know," he said, "that once during

the discussion, just when Gwinneyfrog was making the last point about the agreeable sensations of a drowning person, I thought I heard the whir of an airship overhead—somewhere over yonder, beyond the summit of that tall Wellingtonia? Did anybody else hear it?"

Nobody else had heard it.

"I can almost fancy I hear it now," said the Colonel.

"I have an excellent cellar," said Panhandle, "and respirators for all my friends."

"Don't you think we had better go into the cellar at once?" suggested Digweed, looking very uncomfortable.

"Absurd!" cried Gwinneyfrog. "It's a mere subjective buzzing in Applebag's consciousness—a kind of auditory hallucination produced by the constant reference to Count Zeppelin. I remember a somewhat similar case in my own experience. A friend and I had been discussing, late into the night, the treatment of *delirium tremens*, and on leaving the club both of us thought we saw, crawling up the marble steps, a big——"

At that moment the clock in the church tower began to strike nine, and Gwinneyfrog, who was sensitive to interruptions, waited to

complete his sentence till the noise should subside.

But the sentence was never completed. Just as the reverberations of the last stroke were fading into silence, there came, from somewhere, the sound of a loud splash, and the gathering darkness was suddenly cleft by a tremendous voice, which, though articulate, was like the roar of a lion in agony and seemed to shake the great cedars to their roots. It came from the river at the bottom of the lawn. "Help!" it thundered. "Help!" it went on roaring; and "Help!" was re-echoed from the hills.

The Parliament started to its feet. "What's that? Where does it come from?" said the five Members all at once.

Applebag was the first to recover his wits. "It comes from the river!" he cried. "Somebody has fallen into the water! Quick, all of you! Off with your coats, waistcoats, collars, and ties! No, no, Panhandle—stick to your braces, man, and hitch your trousers up, all of you, a little higher. Empty your pockets of everything heavy. We can kick off our boots as we run. It's not difficult—I taught my men to do it in India."

Down the garden path and across the

sloping lawn raced the five Members, the impetuous Applebag leading, the cautious Digweed bringing up the rear. A line of coats, hats, boots, ties, linen collars, and shirt studs marked the trail. Digweed even took the precaution of throwing away his latchkey, his cigar-cutter, his penknife, and a handful of small change from his trouser pockets.

"Leave me to keep the drowning man in sight and to give directions," shouted the Colonel from the front. "Don't all be giving orders at once. Remember I'm in command!"

"Get out the punt!" shouted Pottertike, who had an intense dislike of cold water.

"Be careful not to hit the drowning man on the head with the pole," shouted Gwinney-frog.

"Ask him for his name!" shouted Digweed.

"And, above all, let us stick to our principles," gasped Panhandle.

There are two sorts of presence of mind. One was exemplified in the conduct of Colonel Applebag. The other in this last remark of Panhandle. Applebag's presence of mind was practical: Panhandle's philosophical. Of the five Members, the President was the only one to whom, in the shock and confusion of the moment, the thought had occurred that prob-

ably the drama now under development had some connection with the discussion of the evening. He alone had asked himself the question, "What if the drowning man should turn out to be Count Zeppelin?"

However, Panhandle's appeal to be true to principle had recalled the Casuists to their philosophical senses. As they stood lined up on the bank, peering into the darkness, in which they could see nothing, and listening to the lamentable outcries of the drowning man, one question was on all their lips. "Who is it?" they asked one another. "Can it be Zeppelin?"

"There's no time to debate the question," broke in Pottertike. "The man will be drowned before we reach a conclusion. Get him out first, and then, if he turns out to be Zeppelin, throw him back again."

"Zeppelin's a powerful man," said Applebag. "If we get him out he may throw *us* into the water. But I tell you he's not Zeppelin. Don't you hear him calling for help in English?"

"That may be a ruse on his part," said Digweed.

"I thought I detected a foreign accent," said Panhandle.

"That may be equally a ruse," said Digweed.

"Hallucination again!" cried Gwinneyfrog. "Why—the fellow speaks English as well as you do. Listen to him now!"

The five Members paused to listen. The drowning man was saying quite deliberately—

"Are you idiots going to leave me to drown? I've sunk twice already, and in ten seconds I shall go down for the last time."

"A fraud, plain as daylight! No man on the point of drowning could speak as deliberately as that. He's not Zeppelin, and, what's more, he's not drowning." This from Digweed.

"On the contrary," said Gwinneyfrog, "a drowning man will often speak more deliberately than he has ever spoken during the rest of his life"—and he drew Digweed aside to discuss the point.

While the debate developed between Digweed and Gwinneyfrog, Applebag was addressing himself to the drowning man. "All right, old boy!" he shouted into the darkness. "We'll have you out in a jiffy. We've got a doctor waiting on the bank—a tip-top man, Gwinneyfrog by name. Meanwhile keep your end up and tread water!—I say, has anybody got an electric torch?"

Digweed had an exceptionally good one.

The historian carried it for the purpose of verifying obscure facts, and, though in the race for the bank he had emptied his pockets of everything else, he had retained this heavy article in view of eventualities, obeying therein the habits of a lifetime.

In an instant a brilliant shaft of light was thrown upon the surface of the deep pool in which the man was struggling. I say struggling; though at the moment when the light caught him no movement was visible in the water. This lay absolutely still, the man's head standing squarely on the surface, as though it had been severed from the body and deposited on a sheet of plate-glass.

The face, which was turned full towards the Casuists, revealed the well-known and unmistakable features of Count Zeppelin. The expression was not pleasant.

"Queer!" said several of the Casuists, speaking together

"A remarkable coincidence," added Digweed. "It staggers belief."

"Remarkable? I call it impossible!" screamed Pottertike, whose dread of a cold bath, especially at that time of night, gave a shrill note to his voice. "The chances are a billion to one against our finding Zeppelin

in the water at the very moment when the Vote had been given to let him drown. Yonder man is not Zeppelin. I wouldn't believe it even if we were to see five hundred heads all exactly like that one."

"There's an element of hallucination about the whole affair: at least a pathological element," said Gwinneyfrog. "That's not a natural head. Look at the way it stands out on the water! In my opinion we are all hypnotised."

But Applebag was now resolved to put the matter to a final test. "Here, you in the water!" he shouted, "who the devil are you?"

"I am Count Zeppelin," answered the man; "I have just fallen out of one of my airships."

"That settles the matter," cried Panhandle. "As President of the Casuists' Club I command you all to leave Count Zeppelin to his fate, in accordance with the vote just taken. Count, I'm genuinely sorry for you. The Club has just determined you must be left to drown. Bear it like a man. I shall be happy to convey any last message you may wish to send to the Kaiser, or to any of your friends, through the medium of the American Ambassador in Berlin."

"Bosh!" roared Applebag. "Here you

drowning fellow, listen to me and pay no attention to the last speaker. He's a worse gas-bag than any airship. Kick your boots off, man, and go on treading water like Beelzebub!"

"Colonel Applebag," said Panhandle, "incidentally I shall thank you for putting a little more restraint on your language. Count von Zeppelin has declared his identity. I order you from the Chair to leave him to his fate."

Digweed now intervened: he had remained throughout the coolest member of the party. "Panhandle," he said, "it seems to me that you are jumping to conclusions, in a way not natural to you, and acting at the same time with a good deal of precipitation; and I confess, by the way, that your conduct puzzles me. Once more, let us be sure of our facts before doing anything. Candidly now, if the man were really Zeppelin, do you think he would be ass enough to give himself away by telling us his name? If once it was known who he was, he would be torn to pieces by an infuriated mob. I'm convinced he is somebody else."

"But if he is somebody else," interposed Pottertike, who now showed signs of changing his mind, "why on earth should he pretend to be Zeppelin?—the very last person in the world somebody else would pretend to be!"

"That's easily explained," said Gwinneyfrog. "The man has reasoned it all out. 'If I pretend to be Zeppelin,' he says to himself, 'those fellows on the bank will make a big push to get me out. They'll reflect that their names will be in the newspapers to-morrow morning. And, of course, I can disillusion them as soon as I am on dry ground.' I suppose you all know," added Gwinneyfrog, "that drowning men reason with extraordinary lucidity."

"I agree with Digweed in any case," replied Pottertike. "The man, even though he may be Zeppelin, is not drowning at all. Think how long he has been floating already and how comfortable he looked when Digweed flashed the torch. In my opinion somebody is pulling the Club's leg." And he shot a meaning glance at Applebag, with whom he was never on the best of terms.

"The one sure way to convict an impostor," said the Colonel, "is to call him an impostor to his face and then see how he takes it. I practised it regularly on the natives of India. We'll try it first on the drowning man, and then" (with a glance at Pottertike) "it will be somebody else's turn. Hi! you in the water! You're a convicted humbug. Con-

fess it and we will pull you out. Deny it, and you drown!"

"I am one of the biggest rogues in creation," answered the man, "and I am within an ace of being done for."

"That means he's Zeppelin!" cried Panhandle triumphantly. "It's a true confession extorted by the imminence of death."

"The exact opposite," said Digweed. "The man is only trying to play on Applebag's confounded conceit about his own sagacity. Take my word for it: the fellow in the water is an accomplished actor. Don't trust anything he says."

"Whatever the rest of us may *think*," said Applebag, "I'm going to *act*.—Drowning man! are you there?"

"Only just," answered the drowning man.

"Well, then, understand that your little game is as plain as daylight to everybody on the bank. When I get you out, as I shall in a moment, I'll give you a good hiding. All that about your having only ten seconds to live is a put-up job. The ten seconds were up long ago: and there you are floating like a cork."

"I am Count Zeppelin, all the same," replied the man, "though I admit that ten seconds

was cutting it rather fine. But I am about at the end of my tether."

"You are a humbug!" shouted the Colonel.

"On the contrary, I am the only person concerned in this affair who is not a humbug," was the answer.

At this moment the scene was one of great confusion. It was obvious that the Colonel had lost his authority as commanding officer of the party. Nobody attended to his orders, and every proposal that he should be listened to evoked a counter-proposal to listen to somebody else. Contrary suggestions were shouted from all sides. Digweed was for washing their hands of the whole business, on the ground that it was "fishy." Gwinneyfrog was for returning to the house and having a glass of toddy. Pottertike was for jumping in. Objurgations flew from side to side. Injurious words were interchanged. Threats were offered. And beneath the medley of voices you might have heard the deep groans of the drowning man—the only consistent and intelligible note in a chaos of logic.

Panhandle alone maintained some show of philosophic calm, though it must be confessed that even he was bewildered. His authority as President of the Club had become hardly

less nominal than that of Applebag as Director of Applications. With great difficulty he secured a moment's silence in which to launch a new proposal, which was, that the Club should immediately constitute a Special Session and reconsider the whole problem from the very beginning.

On hearing this, Pottertike plucked Applebag by the sleeve and drew him aside. "A word in your ear, Colonel," he said. "Observe Panhandle's strategy. He's playing a deep game; and we are falling into the trap. And Digweed is in league with him—see how confidentially they are conferring over yonder. Their plan is to prolong the argument over the man's identity and so drown him by mere efflux of time. In a few moments our chance of saving the man will vanish and Panhandle will have talked out the Bill. We must act at once."

Meanwhile Digweed was saying to Panhandle: "I see through the whole thing. It's a practical joke of Applebag's, the point of which is to render English philosophers ridiculous in the eyes of the German intellectuals. Listen. I have reason to think that Applebag is in the pay of Germany. I have been studying his actions for a long

time past. He and the man in the water are acting in collusion. Everything that has passed between them bears unmistakable signs of having been carefully rehearsed."

"What you say about Applebag distresses me greatly," replied Panhandle, "but I don't believe it. I grant you that the way he has put himself forward in the whole business is a trifle disturbing, and I think we have reason to complain of his officiousness and of his manners. But on the whole he seems to me to have acted with manly straightforwardness and soldier-like candour."

"All assumed; and all part of the game," said Digweed. "President, we've been harbouring a traitor, and he shall meet a traitor's fate. In five minutes from now I shall throw Applebag into the water and leave him to drown—unless the Count chooses to rescue him."

"Then you think it is Zeppelin after all," said Panhandle quickly, forgetting in his eagerness the impending fate of Applebag. "I thought you would come over to my side."

"I'm not sure till I see deeper into Applebag's treachery. The man in the water *may be* Zeppelin. But he'll come to no harm. For, whoever he is, he's certainly not drowning; and if we leave him to drown—well,

he won't drown, but swim to shore and spend the night plotting with Applebag against the interests of the country."

While this conversation was in progress, Gwinneyfrog, who had succeeded in detaching Pottertike from the Colonel, was confiding a secret to the mathematician.

"I am going to make a confession," he said. "I've been convinced all along that the man in the water was Zeppelin; but I pretended the contrary because I didn't want the poor devil to be left to drown. No human life, not even Zeppelin's, ought to be sacrificed merely for the sake of philosophical consistency. Pottertike, look me in the face, and say—have you also been insincere?"

"A little," answered Pottertike. "But after all, Gwinneyfrog, the notion of Zeppelin having fallen out of an airship is a trifle preposterous. Think of the length of the fall and calculate the acceleration and the shock. And even if he had fallen out, the people in the airship would have rescued him."

"Perhaps they threw him out," suggested the other. "There may have been a mutiny. And, by the way, what's your impression of Panhandle?"

"A cold-blooded monster," whispered Potter-

tike. "Fancy his wanting to carry out the vote of the Club by leaving poor old Zeppelin to drown! And defending it in the name of consistency! He ought to be thrown into the water himself and left to drown. I've half a mind to do it."

"My plan is better," replied the doctor. "You and Applebag and I will plunge in at once, without saying a word to anybody, draw Zeppelin to the other side of the river, take him to a first-class hotel, order a bottle of champagne, and spend a jolly evening all together, leaving Panhandle and Digweed to go to the devil. But, I say—where's Applebag?"

The question remained unanswered, for, at that moment, a last despairing cry broke forth from the drowning man. "I can tread water no longer!" he cried. "Good-bye."

To the edge of the bank rushed the four remaining members of the Casuists' Club. Gwinneyfrog flung the lifebuoy—which he had been carrying all the time—far into the water. Pottertike made ready to dive, and was in the very act of springing, when Panhandle caught him by the waistband of his trousers and pulled him back.

"Wait a moment till I give you a light,"

cried Digweed. "We must see what we are doing." And he flashed his electric torch upon the pool.

The drowning man had vanished. As the Casuists strained their eyes over the pool they saw three bubbles rise slowly and at long intervals, and burst on the surface of the water. Then all was still.

"We've done our duty," said Panhandle.

"We've committed murder," said Pottertike.

"We've been hypnotised," said Gwinneyfrog.

"We are betrayed," said Digweed.

There was a pause.

"Somebody is pulling my leg," said Panhandle.

"And mine," said each of the others in turn.

"And now," said Digweed, "we'll square accounts. To the water with Applebag!——"

But the Director of Practical Applications had disappeared.

Next day the pool was carefully dragged, without result, save for a pair of large German boots. Much further down the river, however, and some days afterwards, there was discovered the body of a drowned man whose features were declared by everybody who

examined them to bear a striking resemblance to those of Count Zeppelin. The outer clothing had disappeared, and there were signs that the body had been searched and robbed. The only doubt as to the identity of the body came from three of the four remaining Casuists. While admitting the resemblance of the drowned man to Zeppelin, they yet denied that he was the same man as he whom they had seen drowning. But the British Public were fully convinced; and when the German papers announced about a month afterwards that Count Zeppelin had just dined with the Kaiser, "This," said the Public, "is only another instance of the calculated mendacity of the German Press."

Since these things occurred the Casuists' Club, minus the presence of Colonel Applebag, has continued its weekly sessions without interruption. But for the time being all questions have been laid aside save that of determining the identity of the man who was left to drown. Panhandle still believes it was Zeppelin. But so far the Parliament, as a Parliament, has come to no conclusion.

"You will remember," said Panhandle, when introducing the first of these discussions, "that

at our last meeting we determined precisely how we would act in the case of Zeppelin."

"And then we acted," interrupted Gwinney-frog.

"Or rather," added Digweed with a sneer, "we refrained from acting."

"The same thing," said Pottertike.

"And now," continued Panhandle without noticing the distinction, "having acted and done the deed, our next duty is to determine precisely *what the deed was that we did.* For I have to confess there is a doubt about it."

"It seems to me," interposed Digweed, "that we ought first to determine what the deed was that we *didn't* do."

"A mere quibble!" exclaimed Pottertike.

Colonel Applebag, in the meantime, remains in hiding.

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